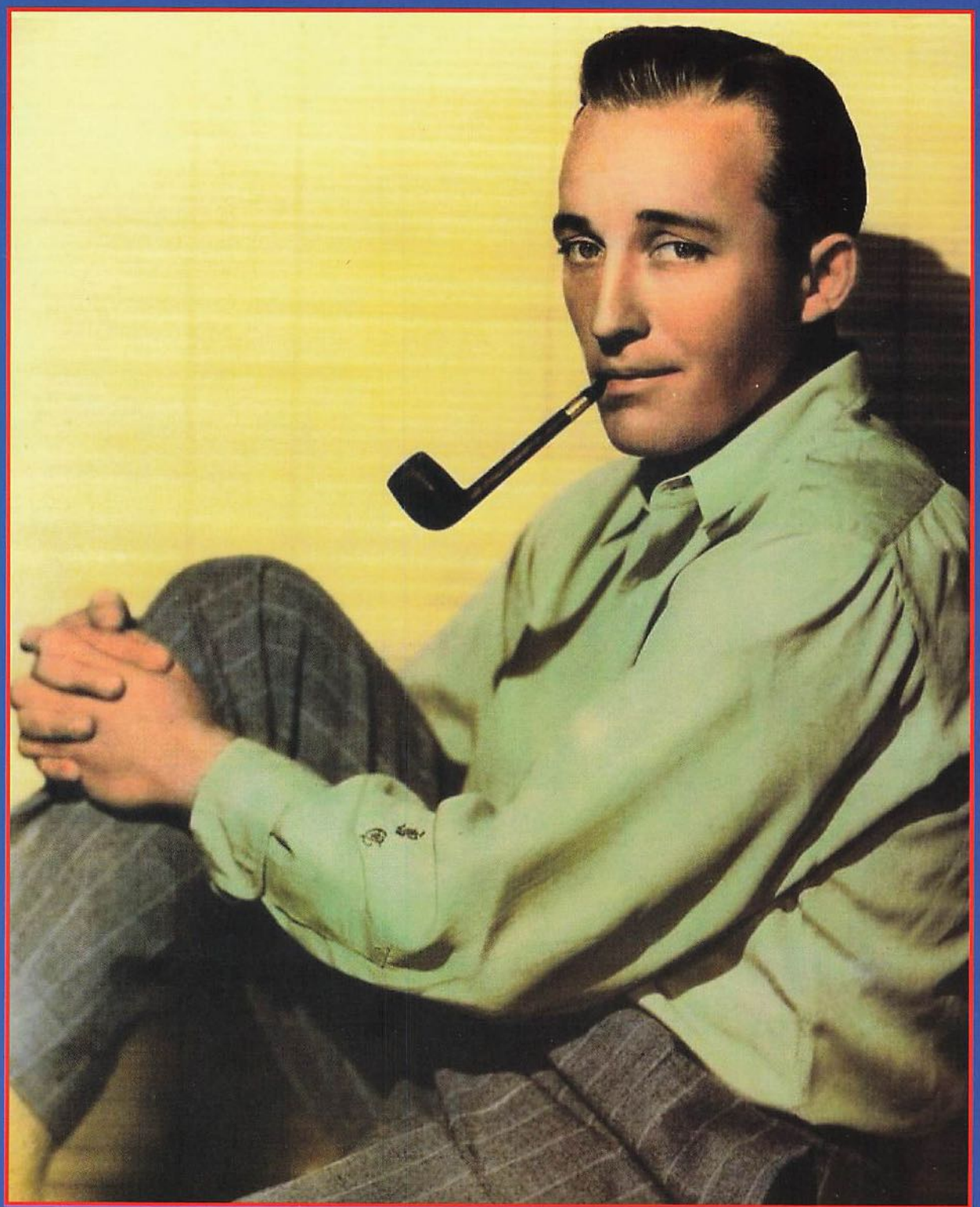
BING

SPRING 2006

No. 142



THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

Web sites:

Club:	www.club-crosby.org
BING magazine:	http.//members.aol.com/macwilmslo/BING_magazine.html
Bing Crosby Internet Museum:	www.mcckc.edu/~crosby/

Honorary President: KATHRYN CROSBY

Honorary Members: Harry Crosby - Mary Crosby Brodka - Nathaniel Crosby - Philip Crosby Jr. Ken Barnes - Pat Boone - Rory Burke - Michael Feinstein - Rich Little - Gia Prima

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(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC.

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EDITORIAL

1936-2006

The International Club Crosby celebrates a milestone anniversary this year...our 70th birthday! It's truly an amazing accomplishment and a testament to Bing's enduring talent to be able to sustain a fan club for that many years. A good year 2006 promises to be too, with several new Crosby projects in the works.

If you haven't already done so, be sure to check out fellow ICC member Ron Hall's Festival Films website at www.fesfilms.com/BingCrosbyVideos.html. Ron has remastered and reissued his exclusive archive of rare Bing Crosby film and television appearances on DVD, augmented with several new and exciting bonus features, including the rare 1944 Canadian war bond short "The Shining Future". You're sure to want to add these new releases to your collections.

Another Minnesota resident, and ICC member, Arne Fogel continues on after over twenty years on radio broadcasting Bing Crosby material with a new weekly show called "The Bing Shift". It can be heard each Saturday evening at 8pm (cst) over KBEM (88.5 FM) in the Twin Cities area, or via the internet at their website, which can be linked to from Arne's own fine website, www.arnefogel.com.

On the CD front, new releases continue with Universal's *Definitive Collection*, a 22 track set of Bing's best compiled by our own Wig Wiggins. Also, be on the lookout for a new EMI reissue of the classic 1975 "A Couple of Song & Dance Men" album produced by the mighty Ken Barnes under the title of "Bing Crosby & Fred Astaire Together". Further details of both of these important releases can be found elsewhere in this issue of BING.

And now, here's Malcolm.

Greg Van Beek

And another anniversary to consider is the 25th anniversary of **Bing's Friends & Collectors Society**. Well done Hobie and Cathie! Keep up the good work.

Looking ahead, it will be the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing next year. Bing's image is bound to be under threat as the years go by but it's crucial that we fight as hard as we can to keep it alive as long as possible.

In the UK, it is noticeable that there is less of Bing on the national radio networks. There are still plenty of plays for Ella, Louis, Frank Sinatra and Billie Holiday (who died in 1959), so why is Bing not heard so often? Certainly the radio presenters seem to use more modern orchestral backings than those used in Bing's peak years and I feel that we need to draw their attention to albums such as 'Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings', 'Bing

With a Beat', 'Fancy Meeting You Here', 'Bing 'N Basie' and the tracks remastered by Ken Barnes and Pete Moore to name but a few. These types of song would fit in very well to the national radio programmes heard in the UK on Sundays (Parkinson, Russell Davies, Ed Stewart, David Jacobs plus, on Tuesdays, Desmond Carrington). So, UK members, and those of you who listen to BBC radio on the Net, please write to the various presenters and bring some pressure to bear. I know that some of the shows are not 'request' programmes but the producers will surely take heed of our wishes. Local radio continues to play Bing and we send our thanks to all those presenters who do so. Please support your local radio station with requests and comments so that they know there are a lot of Crosby fans listening

It always nice to read about other celebrities talking about Bing and in January, Sir Anthony Hopkins was on *The Charlie Rose Show* on PBS in the USA. He was asked by Charlie Rose what performances on a stage by other performers stood out in his memory and he immediately responded "Bing Crosby in 1977." Sir Anthony recalled Bing's "total relaxation, ease, mastery of his material, and charisma." Sir Anthony's warmth, sincerity and obvious admiration for Bing stood out. Fancy Hannibal Lecter liking our man!

Another packed issue of the magazine for you this time and our special thanks are due to Arthur Blood for the back cover. Arthur has a knack of producing very attractive montages and this one which uses the covers of the Bing's Hollywood LPs is rather special. So, I'll leave you to get on with your reading.

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

70 years ago in January 1936, Bing hosted the Kraft Music Hall for the first time, he joined a syndicate to establish the Del Mar race track with films *Rhythm On The Range*, *Pennies From Heaven* and 50 recordings following in that eventful year. And as Greg has mentioned, it was during this year 1936, that an unknown group had the foresight to establish a club for Bing admirers called CLUB CROSBY. Little could this group have imagined that 70 years on, the club would still exist, albeit with the word INTERNATIONAL added to its title.

We salute the founders of the club and trust that we will continue to honour Bing's name and carry on for as long as we are able, to preserve and promote his unparalleled musical legacy.

Spring is a good time to reflect on our past year's work and, following another successful year of ICC activity, it is my pleasant duty to commend the ICC team for their unstinting and dedicated work during 2005.

Members have been fulsome in their praise of BING and the interesting articles contained therein. I am often asked – how do we do it? i.e. how do we manage to provide so much interesting material, issue after issue. The answer is two fold, one is that we tap a rich vein in exploring Bing's legacy and the second part is that we are fortunate to have a team of dedicated and interesting contributors.

The production of the magazine belies a tremendous effort on the part of a small team and I do hope that members appreciate the hard work carried out by that tiny band of workers to bring you your much-admired journal.

2006 shows promise with the prospect of Carolyn Schneider's new book on her uncle Bing, more copies of the Jonzo CDs and not forgetting three more interesting copies of BING.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend the hand of friendship to new members from around the world and trust that they will gain much from being members of the ICC.

CANADA

Barry Bannatyne (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Greg Howden (Vancouver, British Columbia)

ENGLAND

Ken Barry (Canvey Island, Essex), Tony Corben (Portsmouth, Hampshire), Derek J Hunt (East Barnett, Hertfordshire), Jonathan Russell (Hexham, Northumberland), Peter Stockton (Halesowen, West Midlands), Mr T Mahoney (Cheltenham, Gloucestershire), Joseph Dunne (Wood Green, London)

SCOTLAND

Gordon Evans (Cumbernauld, Glasgow)

GERMANY

Dieter Beier (Nurnberg)

SPAIN

Patrick Campbell (Alicante)

UNITED STATES

Honorary member – Phillip Crosby, Jr. (Woodland Hills, California)

Stephen Daigle (Yorba Linda, California), Bill Daugherty (Brooklyn, New York), Eileen Donohoe (San Leandro, California), Leigha Hardy (Peverly, Missouri), Alice Kane (Marengo, Illinois), Kische Kumura (Waialua, Hawaii), Richard Lefevre (Rutland, Vermont), Sally Monaghan (South Orange, New Jersey), Chuck Powers (Chicago, Illinois), Dennis Rodgers (Sharon, Massachusetts), John Sammons (Jefferson City, Missouri), Ronald Sarbo (New York, New York), Frank Schell (Chicago, Illinois), Robert Wade (Virginia Beach, Virginia).

DONATIONS

The International Club Crosby is indebted to the following members who have been exceptionally generous in their gifts to the club. The donations are formally and gratefully acknowledged and I'm sure that all non-donating members will acknowledge the help

given by our generous friends. If any name is missing, then please let me know and I will make amends in the next issue of BING.

We salute:-

Paul Hennessey (Raheny, Dublin), Donald Bostock (Virginia Water, Surrey), Ian Arnott (Inverness, Scotland), Gerard Hanlon (Waterford, Ireland), Alistair Sherlow (Juniper Green, Edinburgh), Roger Addey (Camborne, Cornwall), Jean Rainey (London), John Davis (Firhouse, Dublin), Jim Byrne (Derry, NI), Brenda Sellers (Louth, Lincolnshire), Goronwy Owen (Llangefni, Anglesey), Matthew & Jean Sprott (Coatbridge, Lanarkshire), Tom White (Blythe, Northumberland), Harold Hanke (Oldbury, West Midlands), Bill Wesley (Upminster, Essex), Matthew Conroy (Dublin), Eric Jackson (Wath-Upon-Dearne, South Yorkshire), Peter Monaghan (Barrhead, Glasgow), Ron Holder (Old Buckenham, Norfolk), Des Hellier (West Hampstead, London), Tom Maher (Worcester), Mr J T W Vaughan (Harborne, Birmingham), June Manton (Thrapston, Northants), Bert Bishop (Maylandsea, Essex), Klaus Halm (Berlin, Germany), Derek McNamee (Dublin 15, Ireland), John Stiles (Pinner, Middlesex), Don Small (Willenhall, West Midlands), Lew Grassby (Dartford, Kent), Mr W A Green (Evesham, Worcester), Arnold Pope (Whitefield, Manchester), Alex Kirton-Vaughan (Edinburgh), Derek Perkins (Dublin), Andreas Bauer (Hamburg, Germany), Arthur Blood (Derby), Ken Heason (Carlton, Nottingham), George Patmore (Shrewsbury, Shropshire), Nick v d Seyp (Dirksland, Netherlands), Stan Hellens (Birchington, Kent), L Mills (Stoke On Trent, Staffordshire), Reginald Thompson (Chigwell, Essex), John McVicar (Glasgow), Frank Challenger (Ripley, Derbyshire), Harry C Ross (Havant, Hampshire), Edgar Lawson (Wallasey, Merseyside), Michael Tyce (Waterstock, Oxford), Mike Mansley (Porthcawl, Mid-Glamorgan), Sylvia Lawrence (Cambridge), Peter Howard (Formby, Merseyside), Dennis Saville (Leigh On Sea, Essex), Alan Lee (Gilley Law, Sunderland), Geoffrey Robinson (Solihull, West Midlands), Wally Oldfield (Raleigh, Essex), John Bignell (Wembley, Middlesex), Trevor Wagstaff (Hornchurch, Essex), Maurice Beardmore (Derby), Ron Field (Morton WA, USA), Frank Brannigan (Malahide, Dublin), Nicholas Morrison, (Leeds, West Yorkshire) Robert Larkin (Tralee, Co. Kerry), Jeremy Rose (Cairanne, France)

DEATHS

Harvey M. Sheirr, whom I met at Hofstra and who was always very helpful to our Editor by sending him a constant supply of Bing-related clippings, died on December 13 at his home in Manhattan. He was 74. An obituary in his local paper quoted his "significant other" of 23 years, Lee Mackenzie, as describing Harvey's passion for Crosby as "He was a fanatic, a total fanatic." He was our kind of man and we shall miss him.

With great sadness I also draw members' attention to the passing of the following members.

Sylvia Crellin (Morden, Surrey), **Brian Jones** (Blackwood, Gwent), **Raymond McCormack** (Newtownabbey, Co Antrim), **Norman Palmer** (South Stanley, Co. Durham) and **Tony Slauter** (Saltdean, East Sussex).

Trevor Wagstaff writes with his tribute to Sylvia.

> "I have had the pleasure of knowing Sylvia Crellin through the Bing club for over 30 years, and her two blind friends, Margaret and Dale, with whom she lived. In spite of their sight deficiency they always displayed a constant happy and cheerful disposition, and optimism generated through Sylvia's love of Bing. It was my pleasure to read on to cassette the whole of BING magazine for them for many years. I'll miss doing this. Sylvia lost out to breast cancer which she fought bravely over the last two years, again uncomplainingly. I'll miss her."

Norman Palmer's death was reported to us by member Jabey Gorman, a lifelong friend of Norman's and equally a fan of Bing's since their childhood days. Norman leaves a widow and two daughters.

We extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of those we have lost.

TROUBADOUR

280 copies of this entertaining and at times enthralling book have been sold and 20 copies remain for sale. The text moves at an interesting pace and the book is very worthwhile reading to get Norman's slant on Bing's evolution as a Troubadour. See the detailed reviews in Books 'N' Bing later in this issue. If you want a copy, be quick! First come, first served.

ME AND UNCLE BING

Carolyn Schneider's book will be available to members in the early part of 2006. Members in the UK, Ireland and Europe who have reserved a copy will eventually receive their copy from me following shipment by Carolyn. Carolyn's book will be a unique insight into her forty-year relationship with her illustrious uncle and also Bing's extended family involvement. If you have not ordered your copy yet, then please write to me with your order.

MEMBERSHIP

At the time of writing my report, February 2006, some 200 members still have to renew their membership! The numbers are split evenly between Wig and me and we trust that our reminder letters will bring most of those who have overlooked their dues back to the fold full of enthusiasm for a further year of BING.

LEEDS 2006

The 41st dinner/meeting will be held on **Sunday 1st of October 2006.**

Until summer, my kindest regards to all members.

Michael Crampton

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2005

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions and donations	9277	Production of BING magazine	8935
Sales - Calendars	1992	Calendars	2046
Leeds meeting - receipts	640	AGM (Leeds) costs	849
Sales – Troubadour	2706	Troubadour	4249
Sales - Jonzo CDs	71	Secretarial costs	394
Sales - Back issues	211	Jonzo CDs	317
Sales - Books	223	Editorial costs	45
Sales – Records	36	Postage – back issues	89
Advert	27	Postage – Books	46
Bank Interest 2005	8	Publicity	38
Bank balance 31/12/2004	7605	Bank balance 31/12/2005	5788
	22796		22796

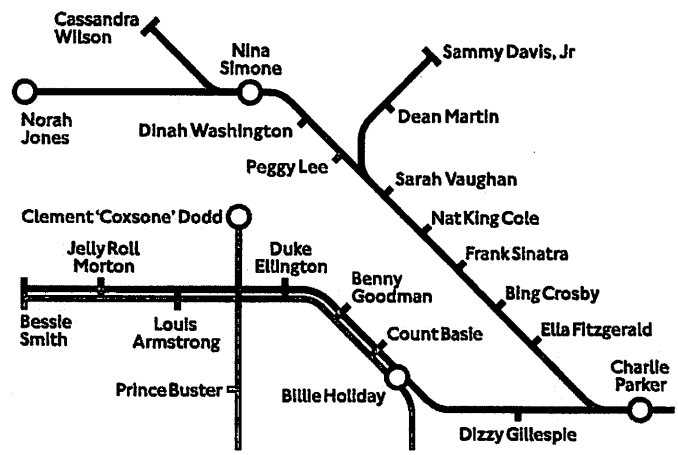
Notes:
1. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary and amounts owing and stocks of books and CDs held are not shown. Funds held on a temporary basis by the various international representatives are not shown either.
2. Allowing for the funds due from our international representatives, both the calendar and 'Troubadour' will show a small surplus.

Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer

Bing on the Underground

Mark Spry drew our attention to an exercise by the Guardian Newspaper to chart the best of 20th century music using London Underground's historic and iconic Tube map. The new interpretation of the Underground map by Guardian Music Writer Dorian Lynskey casts each Tube line as a musical genre, and each station as artist. Mr. Lynskey wrote about his project and here's a short extract:

> *"I started out with a packet of coloured crayons, four sheets of A4 taped together and a big box of doubt, but the different character of each line quickly lent itself to a certain genre. Pop intersects with everything else, so that had to be the Circle Line; classical music for the most part occupies its own sphere, which made it perfect for the Docklands Light Railway. There were a couple of false starts but by the end of one afternoon I had assigned genres to almost all the lines and thrashed out most of the major intersections. The key stations naturally went to the most eclectic artists, not necessarily the most important: the Beatles may be more significant than Beck but even their most devoted fan must admit that they never tried rapping. . .Other people will quibble with omissions - it's a shame, for example, that the Circle Line constantly runs in tandem with either the District or Metropolitan lines, thus leaving no room for pure pop acts such as Kylie Minogue and the Pet Shop Boys."*



So where's Bing? He can be found on the Metropolitan 'jazz line' (where Pinner Station would normally be). Posters of the Musical Underground map are available from London's Transport Museum's website (http://www.ltmuseumshop.co.uk/) and gift shop, priced £7.95. All profits from sales will aid the current renovation of the Museum. The Museum can be found at 39 Wellington St., Covent Garden, London WC2E 7BB (Phone: 020 7379 6344)

Harken To Me Senorita

Many of us in the ICC often get requests for rare Crosby material and some months ago, Michael

Crampton's better half, Judy, received an urgent phone call from a lady in Wales who was seeking a Bing song for her friend, Ann, who had not got long to live. Ann had recalled her father singing a song to her with lyrics something like "Harken to me senorita, Sad is the song I will tell." The lady had been to various libraries and universities in Wales seeking help without success,

Judy couldn't speak to Michael as he was away working, so she rang your Editor. I don't have a great memory for lyrics but on this occasion they struck an immediate chord. It wasn't a Bing song but it was a song from a Bing film. Also I seemed to recall that the song was on the other side of the Bing 78 of "Zing A Little Zong." I didn't have the 78 any more but I did have the film "Just For You" on DVD so I recorded the song from the film soundtrack and sent it off on a CD with several other Bing songs. In due course, I received a touching letter from the lady who wrote: "Ann was over the moon to hear it after all this time and she said she was happy now. She died 8 days after hearing the CD."

The song was "The Maiden of Guadeloupe" by Jane Wyman. It was nice to be able to help.

Malcolm Macfarlane

A Mystery - Can You Help?

At the Leeds meeting last year, Carolyn Schneider, produced a photograph of Bing and Lindsay in England in 1953 with an unknown man and lady. Carolyn wondered if any of us could identify the mystery couple. No one could really help and the photograph is reproduced here to see if any readers can shed light on their identity.

Member George Patmore had a feeling that the couple could be Lord and Lady Egremont and he went as far as to write to the present Lord Egremont to check on the matter. He received a nice reply from Lord Egremont stating that the couple were not known to him. George had previously obtained a book from his local library written by the earlier Lord Egremont called "Wyndham & Children First" and it had a nice page about his Lordship's meeting with Bing in 1966.

> . . . The difference between the amateur and the professional - if the amateur is a proper amateur - is that the amateur dabbles.
>
> I was reminded of this distinction when Mr. Bing Crosby was fishing one of my rivers in Cumberland. Mr. Crosby is the most delightful of men and it was such a pleasure to have him and his charming wife Kathy with us.
>
> He is also, as I quickly discovered, the most professional of men in the best sense of the term. With all that glittering success behind him, we now find him giving a lot of time to one of his favourite sports, fishing. Hence his appearance on my property in Cumberland, where I have some rather good salmon fishing.
>
> I was struck from the first by Bing Crosby's careful and meticulous way of going about his sport. On this occasion he was doing it for a film about fishing. He was surrounded by professionals - a professional producer, director and cameraman and so forth - and he showed himself an extremely able fisherman. Salmon abounded, leaping about in the river like billy-ho, sometimes over Crosby's line - but they just wouldn't take his fly. And so it went on day after day. As any salmon fisherman knows, this is the sort of thing that may happen. Crosby fished on and on, going out at 7 a.m. and making four thousand casts a day. The camera crew stood by (at a cost of £1,000 a day) waiting for him to catch a fish. He could not have fished the river better, and I was deeply impressed by his professionalism, and by his calm and patience.
>
> He would croon quietly to himself in that famous and charming voice, making up the words as he went along - for example:
>
> The River Derwent
> Is in a ferment
> With fish.
> But they won't bite.
>
> I am not qualified to speak about the mind of a professional. But Dr. Johnson said: 'It is wonderful when a calculation is made, how little the mind is actually employed in the discharge of any profession.' I wondered how Bing's mind had been employed day after day with all those four thousand fruitless casts. Thinking of Kathy, I shouldn't be surprised.
>
> (Lord Egremont, writing in his book *Wyndham And Children First*, page 207)

However, we still don't know who the mystery couple are. Bing stayed at The Savoy in London so he could have met all manner of dignitaries. Anyone have any ideas? George Patmore wants to start sleeping again!

Bing in the digital downloads charts

"In the what?" many of you will be thinking. Well, with iPods and other MP3 players selling in their millions, it is becoming usual to download albums and singles via the Internet from sources such as Napster, All Cool Music and the iTunes store. Charts are maintained by Billboard and just before Christmas, Brian Weber of North Hollywood, California, added several notes to the Bulletin Board of the Bing Crosby Internet Museum as follows:

"In this age of downloaded singles, Bing's "White Christmas" has climbed into the Top 40 on Billboard's Hot Digital Songs chart, being the 36th most downloaded single monitored last week, with 10,019 downloads sold for the chart week ending December 11. Expect it to rise higher as Christmas approaches. . . For your information, here are all the Christmas singles appearing in the Top 50 of Billboard's Hot Digital Songs, with their chart positions, last week's sales figures, and the total sales of downloads to date:
#1 All I Want for Christmas - Mariah Carey, 41,316, Total 208,729
#23 Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree - Brenda Lee, 13,941, Total 82,763
#27 Feliz Navidad - Jose Feliciano, 11,962, Total 63,580
#28 Santa Baby - Eartha Kitt, 11,517, Total 63,970
#32 The Christmas Song - Nat King Cole, 10,383, Total 56,113
#36 White Christmas - Bing Crosby, 10,019, Total 68,129
#37 Jingle Bell Rock - Bobby Helms 9,777, Total 50,107
#42 The Chipmunk Song - The Chipmunks, 9,372, Total 50,963
#45 Where are You, Christmas? - Faith Hill, 8,896, Total 56,377
#47 Blue Christmas - Elvis Presley, 8,597, Total 48,897
#48 Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)- U2, 8,596, Total 35,740
#50 Andy Williams - It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year, 8,394, Total 41,003

> . . . I sent off an email to Billboard's Fred Bronson, who authors their weekly "Chart Beat Chat" column, to make note of the "White Christmas" appearance on the downloads chart... and he actually responded in his column online! Here's my email, with his response:
>
> Hi Fred!
> I noticed Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" has climbed into the top 40 on Billboard's Hot Digital Songs chart. It's my understanding that recurrent rules do not allow the song to chart on the Hot 100. (Hard to believe the Hot 100 did not yet exist when Bing had his final "new" top 40 hit in 1957!) Still, does this not give Bing Crosby the longest span of top 40 entries on a Billboard pop chart? I count 65 years and five months — July 1940 to December 2005. It's certainly the longest span for a re-charting single, something we will never see again on the Hot 100 under the current rules. I'm sure when Bing recorded this single in 1942, he'd have laughed if you'd told him it would still be selling 63 years hence!
> Sincerely,
> Brian Weber
> North Hollywood, Calif.
>
> **Dear Brian,**
> **Bing Crosby was recording as early as 1931, though he didn't chart in Billboard until July 1940 because that's when the charts began. So you're correct, he has set a new record for the longest span of Billboard chart hits.**
> **Fred Bronson**

I think if you could go back in time to 1942 and tell Bing that "White Christmas" would still be charting in 2005, he would not only laugh, he would ask you to explain what a "paid digital download" was. So there we go... a teeny bit of extra publicity for our favorite singer."

Great job, Brian. Well done! Brian also spotted that on Amazon.com *Holiday Inn* was No.4 seller under "Videos" and *White Christmas* was No.7 on that particular day.

But on the digital downloads front, it got better! Within days, an article by Tenley Woodman appeared in the Boston Herald of December 24.

Do you hear what I hear? Christmas classics rank high among digital downloads

Everything old is new again. **Classic crooner Bing Crosby's rendition of "White Christmas" is sitting pretty on digital download charts even though he recorded it in 1942.** On iTunes' "Top 10 Vocal Downloads" chart, Crosby is ranked No. 4 next to such contemporary artists as Josh Groban, whose version of "O Holy Night" is listed as No. 1. Other oldies favorites dominate the list, including Eartha Kitt and Henri Rene's "Santa Baby" at No. 3; Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Jordan's "Baby It's Cold Outside" at No. 7; Perry Como and The Ray Charles Singers' "Do You Hear What I Hear" at No. 9; and Carmen McRae and Sammy Davis Jr.'s "Baby It's Cold Outside" at No. 10.

Why recycle these artists of yore when there are newer renditions available for iPod consumption?

"The older songs are still the standard. Only a handful of new songs have emerged," said Sean Ross, vice president of music and programming at Edison

Media Research.

"Almost everything has been covered at some point in the past 10 years, before all these Christmas stations started going up. During the month of the year that stations go all Christmas, the old songs have the same currency as new songs," Ross said.

On Napster, Mariah Carey is the current holiday chart-topper with "All I Want for Christmas is You," but it was the site's traditional Christmas radio station that was the most popular last week.

"It takes a long time for these songs to become traditions. People tend to ignore the time/space continuum," Ross said. "For a while, some program directors worried about loading up their stations with Nat King Cole, Andy Williams and Johnny Mathis. The audience seems to have no similar concerns."

In Billboard magazine's "Hot Digital Songs" list for the week ending today, the chart, which ranks the top 75, is trimmed with Christmas classics.

Among the 14 World War II and baby boomer songs straddled between Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" (No. 1) and Wham!'s "Last Christmas" (No. 75) are Brenda Lee's "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" (No. 23), Jose Feliciano's "Feliz Navidad" (No. 27), Nat King Cole's "The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to You)" (No. 32), David Seville and The Chipmunks' "The Chipmunk Song" (No. 42) and Andy Williams' "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" (No. 50).

Tenley Woodman

Still the First Lady of 'the Crosby'

The ICC has a Google News Alert and every day, your Editor receives an email detailing mentions of Bing seen in newspapers all over the globe. December sees a deluge of such items with Bing's name being linked to Christmas almost everywhere. Then there is another surge in late January just before the annual Pebble Beach golf tournament. It is over 20 years since Bing's name was linked to the tournament but every year newspapers highlight his original connection. This year was even more special - Kathryn Crosby attended the tournament again for the first time since the mid-1980s and under the above heading, Tim Kawakami of The Mercury News recorded the occasion the posterity.

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. - It was bright and it was early, and there was Kathryn Crosby, quietly waking the echoes of the Clambake past.

Oh, you could tell Thursday morning that she had been away from this event for 20 years - she asked for directions to Pebble Beach's first tee, she kept running into long-lost acquaintances, and she marveled at the size and scope of the current operation.

But she still symbolized so much - Bing's widow and proud mother of Nathaniel and Harry, single-digit handicappers who comprised half of a nostalgic first foursome of the day. She was still the First Lady of the Crosby, even if it's called the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. Thursday, for a little while, on her sons' march through Pebble under startlingly sunny skies, it was the Crosby again.

"It was very normal to come back," she said as she walked the fairways, intently watching her sons. "It was not a big decision to make. It was just very nice to be with my sons and follow them in their adventures."

Said Nathaniel: "It still is the old tournament. It still is."

She had been gone for two decades after she tussled with tournament officials and decided to pull the Crosby name off the event and start a new Crosby amateur/charity event in North Carolina that lasted 16 years. Some people thought she might never come back. But, at 72, she was back, with no bitterness and giddily reconstructing her wardrobe from Nathaniel's 1981 U.S. Amateur Championship victory at the Olympic Club.

"Same hat, same jacket - all of those things are very symbolic," Kathryn Crosby said, pointing to her ensemble. "I don't think I had anything to do with it, but I have been lucky sometimes."

So yes, she was very much the smart, stylish woman I remember from years ago, when I grew up in Burlingame a half-mile from the Crosbys' Hillsborough mansion and went to elementary school practically in their backyard.

I only knew her from the Christmas specials and her interviews during the old Crosby telecasts – "Bing was the best interview!" she said of her old reporting days.

But we swapped old neighborhood tales (hint: her and Bing's neighborhood was a lot more luxurious) and later she tapped me on the shoulder and told another reporter: "He's my homey."

Well, now. When you're at Pebble Beach and Kathryn Crosby calls you her homey, that pretty much makes your day. Or week. Her presence seems to do that, or at least it seemed to do it Thursday for her sons, for the fans who welcomed her back, one at a time, and for the players who remember back to the days of the old Crosby Clambake.

"I think it's a great reminder that this tournament, the product itself, the origination of a pro-am, is my dad's legacy," Nathaniel Crosby said of playing with his brother with his mother nearby. "Regardless of what the tournament's called."

Gary Vandeweghe, the trustee of the trust Bing Crosby set up for his children, joined the reunion as Harry's caddie, and playfully said he'd be calling the boys' sister Mary soon to chastise her for missing it.

"It's just nice to see all the folks remember that this is 'the Crosby'," Vandeweghe said.

Kathryn Crosby said she couldn't pinpoint a single fondest memory from the Clambake era, but did offer up

one pure memory.

"I remember one wonderful Crosby when everyone was playing at Pebble on Saturday, I went to Spyglass with Bing and we played 18 holes, the two of us," she said. "We were all alone on the course."

Did she play well? "I did! I did that day."

Bing suggests to Kathryn the best way to play the next hole.

One player had no trouble remembering the last Crosby in 1985 - Mark O'Meara said he was glad Kathryn was back this year and said how proud he was to be the winner that final Clambake year.

"It's a Trivial Pursuit question, did you know that?" O'Meara said. "Oh yeah. Who was the last guy to win the Bing Crosby National Pro-am, 1985? Mark O'Meara!"

By the way, Harry (a three-handicap) and Nathaniel (a two) both played impressively. In fact, with his pro teammate David Frost shooting a 78, it was Nathaniel's play alone that carried the team to a 2-under-par score.

"I think I'm going to get my buddy David Frost up to the driving range," Nathaniel said, laughing, "and start kicking him in the butt a little bit."

Vandeweghe said there was plenty of teasing and competition going on between the brothers, another reminder of that old Clambake spirit. Of course, the best reminder was Kathryn herself, wandering near her sons, ending 20 years of Pebble Beach absentia. Why, again, did you skip this event from 1986 until now, Kathryn?

Pause. "I just ... wasn't here," she said with a smile.

But she was here Thursday, bright and early and happy, and will be here Friday and at least Saturday. All of her homeys are pretty happy about that.

Tim Kawakami

(Editor: Another article by Ron Agostini, the Modesto Bee Sports Columnist, gave some extra information.)

Pebble Beach Notes: Kathryn Crosby makes return

PEBBLE BEACH — Twenty years since she last walked the spectacular grounds of Pebble Beach, Kathryn Crosby — the widow of Bing Crosby — returned Wednesday.

For the record, she was happy to be back and, no, the title of the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am beginning today will not soon be changed. For now, no retro "Crosby," the name of the tournament through 1985.

"It (pulling the Crosby name from the tournament) was Marvin Davis' decision," said Crosby, 72, in reference to the oilman who owned Pebble Beach Company and the 20th Century Fox studios during the mid-1980s. Davis died in September of 2004. Crosby reportedly yanked the family name from the tournament in 1985 because the event had become too commercialized. AT&T became the title sponsor the following year.

"It's not up to me anymore," she said. "The Crosby is still the Crosby."

Mrs. Crosby eventually took the family title to North Carolina, where her tournament raised $22 million for charity during a 16-year run. Otherwise, Mrs. Crosby was delighted to be back at Pebble Beach, where her icon husband — until his death in 1977 — staged his remarkable "clambake." The former actress-vocalist is still active in writing, music and theatrical performance and has authored several books about Bing.

"It (the tournament today) is a little bit old and a little bit new," she said. "I was so impressed by the courtesy of the volunteers and the traffic control from one course to another. It's so different now. It so happens I'm staying at Cypress Point in the same room where Bing and I used to stay. I remembered how he would get up in the morning and curse at the weather."

Gazing out the window and surveying Wednesday's brilliance, she added, "This is not Crosby weather."

Another reason for her homecoming was her sons Nathaniel and Harry, amateurs who are paired together for the first time at the AT&T. It's been several years since Harry has played here and even longer for Nathaniel, the 1981 U.S. Amateur champion and low amateur at the '82 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach.

"I couldn't find them today during their practice round," Mrs. Crosby said. "I'm so happy for Harry, who's now a father."

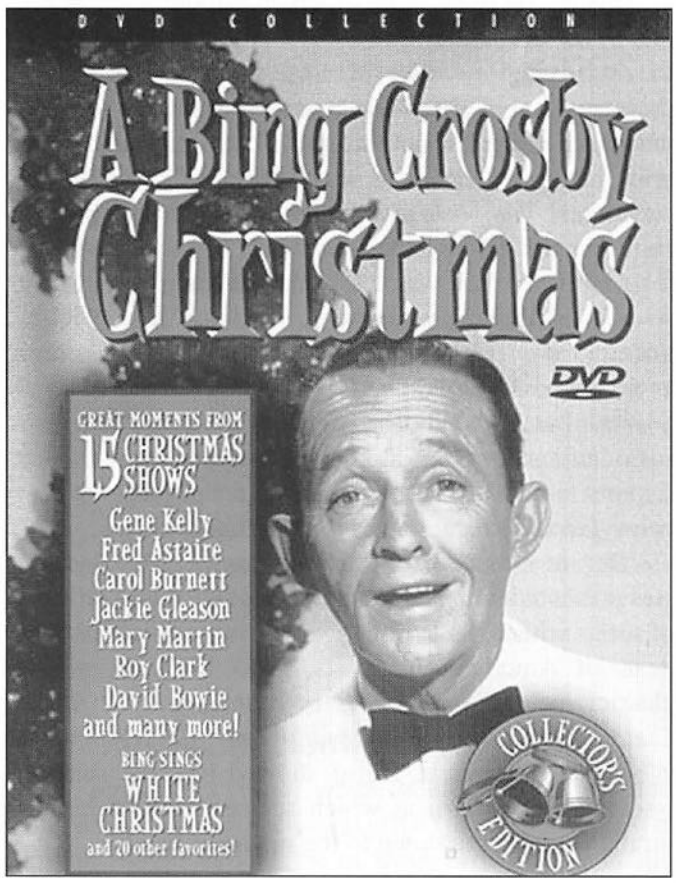
Ron Agostini

(Editor: For the golfers amongst you, Harry Crosby and his partner just missed the cut after the third round by two shots. Nathaniel and his partner were 12 shots behind them.)

Bing's man in New York is still at it!

Not content with the magnificent film festival he arranged in July last year, Martin McQuade has continued to be very busy promoting Bing in the New York area by organising and / or attending a number of events.

First of all, the Christmas season at Lord and Taylors Department store in Manhattan was launched in splendid style on November 15th with a celebration to unveil the annual Holiday windows. Kathryn Crosby participated in the event, singing "White Christmas" accompanied by the Boys Choir of Harlem, as manufactured snow fell about the stage on the street in front of the main entrance. The celebration was covered live by Fox Channel 5 news at 5pm.



A sensational tribute to Bing and Bob Hope followed on November 16 at Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall. Martin McQuade had not been involved in the preparations for the event but he was there as our representative. Hosted by Michael Feinstein, the concert, entitled "On the Road with Bing and Bob", consisted of performances by Mr. Feinstein and other cabaret personalities of songs identified with the two travelling companions. Kathryn and Harry Crosby were introduced from the audience. Linda Hope and Gary Giddins were interviewed on stage by Mr. Feinstein, both providing interesting insights. Michael Feinstein's renditions of "It's Delovely", "I Can't Get Started", "But Beautiful", "Moonlight Becomes You", and "The Second Time Around" were exceptional. The full house obviously appreciated the presentation and it was a truly memorable night in New York.

A few days later, on November 21st., Fort Hamilton Army Base in Brooklyn, New York, extended a warm welcome to Kathryn Crosby when she visited the historic installation for a holiday salute to her husband. After a gracious opening statement by Mrs. Crosby, and a bestowing of a special citation to her, the audience enjoyed a screening of *A Bing Crosby Christmas: Just Like The Ones We Used to Know*, which was hosted by Mrs. Crosby and Gene Kelly, and originally broadcast in 1979.

This was followed by Martin McQuade's remarks on Bing's impact on WW2 and a compilation of patriotic and military clips from Crosby movies and TV shows which had been put together by Martin. The evening concluded with a question and answer session with Mrs. Crosby and our man in New York.

The large gathering, which consisted of USO officials, and veterans and ex-POWs from WW2, was profoundly moved by the memories this event elicited, and a true and warm outpouring of affection for Bing was in evidence. Mrs. Crosby was visibly moved by the expressions of gratitude conveyed to her, and she was deeply impressed that "friends of Bing" came to the Fort to pay their respects. Afterwards many repaired to nearby Griswolds Pub to join Mrs. Crosby for cocktails and a light buffet, and to reflect on her husband's legacy.

The following week there was a tribute to Bing at The Players Club in New York on November 29. This was a tremendous success, with a full house in attendance. The specific focus of the night was the 75th anniversary of Bing's landmark engagements at the New York and Brooklyn Paramount Theaters. The background to this Crosby milestone was offered in Martin McQuade's opening remarks. Clips from Crosby movies with New York locales, as well as New York themed songs from Crosby TV shows, were interspersed throughout the evening. Songs about New York, sung by Bing, were played during dinner. Crosby fans Jane Stoutenborough, Sally Monaghan, Ron Sarbo, Pat Kenny, and Patti Dey were there and the evening was an emotional testimonial to Bing's relationship with the Big Apple.

Joe Franklin, James Sheldon (who directed the sitcom, *The Bing Crosby Show*), Jerome Pickman (head of sales and publicity at Paramount Pictures during the 1950's), and Bill Harbach (producer of *The Hollywood Palace*) spoke about their friendships with Bing. Mr. Harbach showed a clip of Bing and Johnny Mercer from a Hollywood Palace show of May, 1966 which brought down the house. Mr. Pickman played an audio tape which Bing recorded on the occasion of Mr. Pickman's marriage. Gary Giddins told several amusing anecdotes, culled from his extensive research. Mr. Franklin

reminisced about his 1976 TV interview with Bing. Martin McQuade read the letter which Bing sent to Mr. Sheldon upon completion of *The Bing Crosby Show*. Martin went on to sing "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime" and "I Found a Million Dollar Baby".

Martin McQuade and Kathryn Crosby were interviewed live on The David Kenney Radio Show on WBAI-FM (99.5) on Sunday, December 4th from 9-11pm. The show featured several Crosby recordings which were interwoven throughout the program.

Finally, almost a year of effort and preparations by Kathryn Crosby, the management of Feinsteins at the Regency, and Martin McQuade resulted in a memorable and emotional tribute to Bing on the evening of December 5 at the Park Avenue cabaret. *Kathryn Crosby Remembers Bing*, with the piano accompaniment of Eddie Sayegh (the vocal coach for Broadway's Light at the Piazza) entertained a packed room of Crosby family and friends. George Steinbrenner (a hunting colleague of Bing's), Oleg Cassini (Mrs. Crosby's couturier), Joseph Stein (the rehearsal pianist for the 1966 Christmas Hollywood Palace), Gary Giddins, Tripp Hornick (co-producer of *The Melody Lingers On*), Ruth Prigozy, and Joe Franklin were joined by Mary Frances Brodka, Nathaniel and Sheila Crosby, and Mihaela Crosby, for a splendid night's fare of personal reminiscences, film clips, photos, and songs. The last of several ovations saw Mary and Nathaniel join Kathryn on stage for what was a stirring reminder of the halcyon Crosby Christmas specials. Even snow (of the natural variety) was supplied outside to provide an extra dose of magic.

But before 2005 finished, there was still time for another Crosby sighting. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* was screened on December 29th at The Donnell Media Center of the New York Public Library as part of a series entitled, "Featuring Luminous Tapestries: Medieval Life on Film."

So it's been a very busy time for Martin and for Kathryn Crosby. But despite all this, Martin still found time to carry out a fascinating in-depth interview with Bill Harbach, the producer of the Hollywood Palace shows. Let's allow him tell us all about it.

William Harbach to the Rescue

A Profile of a Television Wizard

In the late fall of 1963, ABC-TV was experiencing what may have been the worst crisis in its young life. *The Jerry Lewis Show*, a live, two-hour, Saturday night extravaganza, was tanking, and fast. Launched with great fanfare as a relaxed showcase for the multi-faceted talents of its wildly popular star, this would absolutely be the most spectacular TV show of them all, with the improvisatory feel of a late-night talk show. Its costs were astronomical, including an eight million dollar first-year budget and a five year, 35 million dollar contract for Lewis. The unwieldy 9:30-11:30 pm slot presumed that loyal viewers would jump ship on both the *The Defenders* and *Saturday Night at the Movies*, while never even embarking on *Gunsmoke*.

The dismal ratings soon revealed this to be a massive miscalculation. ABC had no alternative, announcing cancellation in mid-November, and buying out Lewis' contract to the tune of two million dollars. Network top brass were desperate to plug the hole created by this unprecedented fiasco. Once the panic subsided, some sane heads decided to seek help from two master trouble-shooters, William O. Harbach and Nick Vanoff. Heeding the S.O.S., these pioneers in the art of the television variety show conjured a bright phoenix to emerge from the ruins, creating a concept which not only salvaged ABC's vaunted Saturday night line-up but which also added a brilliant chapter to the TV career of Bing Crosby.

This rescue story, more of which follows anon, is just one of the fascinating stories in the life of Mr. Harbach, the surviving member of this legendary team. He recently granted an in-depth interview to this reporter, who has had the distinct fortune of becoming acquainted with him over the course of recent Crosby-related endeavors. The Metropolitan Club, located at one east Fifth Avenue in Manhattan and where he resides when in town, served as the venue for our late summer colloquy. As this patrician gentleman greeted me in the lobby under a towering, vaulted ceiling, I felt akin to Satchmo as he arrives at C. K. Dexter-Haven's mansion in *High Society*, but his abundant friendliness made the ornate surroundings seem most casual. Soon we were seated at a round table in one of the club's banquet rooms, busily being prepared for a dinner for UN dignitaries.

Before commencing our conference, Mr. Harbach was presented with a CD consisting of Crosby renditions of songs with lyrics written by Mr. Harbach's father, the dean of American librettists, Otto Harbach, whose classics include *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*, *One Alone*, *Cuddle Up a Little Closer*, *Indian Love Call*, *Sympathy*, *Who*, and *Yesterdays*. I also showed him the summer issue of this periodical which seemed to hold him in thrall. We soon got down to the matter at hand.

The Formative Years

Born in 1919, this scion of show-biz aristocracy was educated at The Choate School and Brown University, excelling at football. His love for the sea was given full vent when, during WW2, he joined the coast guard. Upon discharge he considered an acting career. He was signed by MGM, appearing in small roles in such films as *Good News* and *Killer McCoy*. Surprisingly, this debonair, handsome and mellifluous fellow failed to make an impression in front of the camera. In 1948, the enterprising Mr. Harbach opted for something different.

TV was making some noise. My father had a friend at NBC. He said, 'Do you want to be a director or a floor

manager?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Forget it, all those jobs are booked.' After almost a year, I did get a master control job at NBC, splicing film for commercials and station breaks. After two years, I became a director on local shows, cooking shows and talk shows, such as one with Skitch Henderson and Faye Emerson.

Mr. Harbach quickly immersed himself in all aspects of television production and direction. In 1952 he responded to something that would become familiar in the course of his career: a plea for assistance. A new and refreshing personality was experiencing some trouble.

After two straight years of work, I took a vacation. No sooner than getting off the Super Chief and arriving at the Beverly Hills hotel, I received a call from NBC to come back to New York. 'We got a radio guy who's going to be hot on TV, but he's very unhappy with his producer. They're not getting along. We think you can handle it.' Well, my ear went up a bit! I asked, 'What's his name?' 'Steve Allen' was the reply. I hadn't heard of him, but I reluctantly agreed to fly back. Once Steve and I met, we bonded instantly.

This early experience at crisis management led to one of the most successful star/producer collaborations in television history, resulting in *The Tonight Show* and, later, *The Steve Allen Show.* It was during the run of the latter that Mr. Harbach made the acquaintance of Nick Vanoff, who was hired to lighten Mr. Harbach's producing chores. This enduring partnership was born out of sheer practicality.

In 1956 NBC wanted to give The Ed Sullivan Show a run for its money and pit The Steve Allen Show opposite it. I was already producing The Tonight Show five days a week so the network hired an up-and-coming producer named Nick Vanoff to lessen my work load.

Mr. Harbach has tales to unfold on these seminal Allen programs. Suffice it to say, he worked closely with the bespectacled wunderkind throughout the fifties winning, along the way, the Peabody, Look Magazine, and Sylvania TV Awards, as well as an Emmy nomination.

The Oldsmobile Shows

In June of 1960, when Allen and NBC parted company, Mr. Harbach was free to respond to yet another urgent call for help. Bing Crosby was in the midst of his run of ABC specials for Oldsmobile, which were being supervised under the banner of his own production company. Bill Colleran, the director of the first three Crosby shows for the automobile company, had recently suffered a horrible accident.

Mr. Harbach recalls. *One night, Bill got drunk. While driving home along Cold Water Canyon, he didn't take the curve in the road on time. He went smack into a house. He suffered tremendous brain damage. It was such a shame. He was absolutely tops.*

Nick Vanoff, who by now had won acclaim producing *The Perry Como Show*, was asked to produce and direct the fourth Crosby Oldsmobile Show as part of a deal which entailed Crosby being a guest on a Como show a few weeks hence. Like all the car-sponsored entries thus far, the installment with Como was a huge ratings winner. Crosby wanted Vanoff to weave his magic again. It just wasn't to be.

When Bing asked Nick if he would like to do another one, he declined, saying, 'I can't. It's too much work. I got to do some Como Shows.' 'Well, who can we get?' asked Bing. Nick replied, ***'Ask my partner, Bill Harbach, to produce and direct. He's great.'*** *Bing said, 'OK.' I had never worked with Bing before, I never even met him. Of course, I immediately agreed. Who wouldn't?*

Thus the stage was set for *The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile* of October 5, 1960, starring Rosemary Clooney, Johnny Mercer, Carol Lawrence, and Dennis, Philip and Lindsay Crosby, under the baton of Nelson Riddle.

Mr. Harbach was abetted by associate producer Murdo MacKenzie and assistant director Margie Rotunda. *'Rosie' Rosenberg, Bing's agent, insisted on using Murdo MacKenzie. Murdo had been working with Bing forever on radio.* MacKenzie performed the same duties on all the Oldsmobile shows; Rotunda on all but the last. (She had recently filled the same slot on the 1957/58 Frank Sinatra series)

Mr. Harbach secured head writer Herb Sargent, a colleague from *The Steve Allen Show*, to help him with the program. Mr. Sargent would later lend his talents to the first several seasons of *Saturday Night Live,* eventually becoming president of the TV Writers Guild. Sargent was aided by fellow scribes Saul Ilson, James Elson, and Sheldon Keller. *Shelly was a pistol. He also worked on the Allen shows with me.*

Sargent, who just passed away in May, 2005, put together the medleys for the show, the most outstanding being *The Song Writers.* This remarkable round-robin, performed by the cast sans The Crosby Boys, begins with an Irving Caesar lyric, *I Want to Be Happy*, from which is spun an ordered sequence of standards, ending with another Irving Caesar composition, *Swanee.* Never has the continuum of American popular music been better illustrated.

That was wonderfully fashioned. I loved the way it returned to center one. It was very tricky. The tempo never changed. We rehearsed the hell out of that because they had to do little moments and say, 'What do you think of that?' and then jump into the tempo. Of course, Bing was such a pro. He could hear something twice, and it's in. He's got it.

In my estimation this exhilarating number is even more remarkable because it follows, without a break, the lengthy opening production number in which Crosby introduces the entire cast to the tune of *On the Street Where You Live.*

I'm glad you noticed that! That seamlessness is just what I wanted. I thought, 'Let's have no dialogue, let's keep everything musical.' It was so exciting. It just kept going, like a snake.

I asked Johnny Mercer to guest. Johnny was not only a great friend of mine, but also of Bing's. They knew each other for a thousand years. In fact, Bing used to date Johnny's wife, Ginger, while he was in the Whiteman band, before he even knew Johnny, even before he met Dixie. Bing and Johnny were so close. It was so cozy with them.

It was Bing's idea to have Rosemary Clooney on this show. He had so much fun with her. They had gone back so far before the show. They were like old tennis shoes. Carol Lawrence was hired because she was hot, just having finished appearing in West Side Story on Broadway. Danny Daniels, whose TV credentials had included *The Martha Raye Show*, was chosen as dance director.

"Rosie' Rosenberg got Nelson Riddle. He had worked on a previous Oldsmobile show (March 2, 1959). *Nelson was the sweetest guy. I asked him once, 'How is it to work with Frank Sinatra?' 'Very exciting, but you have to change your underwear a lot.' That's perfect! Bing was so relaxed. They were as different as night and day.*

Bill Thompson, choral director on several recent Crosby LP's, was brought on board to arrange two intergenerational ensembles: a do wop version of *Please*, and a rousing *Mississippi Mud*. How did The Crosby Boys get along with their father?

I had the feeling they were always front and center. They weren't relaxed. They wanted to do well, naturally, and they worked very hard and long with Thompson to get things right. They were darling kids. Don't get me wrong. There was a lot of chemistry. They just seemed a little terrified, maybe because Bing was so strict.

The boys show Bing how to sing 'Please' in the October, 1960 show.

Mr. Harbach was reminded that at one point in the show Lindsay refers to his and his brothers' fear. *That was no ad lib. It was in the script.* Were the boys perhaps intimidated by their father's high standards? *Yes, perhaps they could not measure up. Well, I hear they were hellions. Anyway, it was a completely different atmosphere with the second family.*

The most unique moment in the show is when three Bing Crosbys sing in tandem. *That again was Herb Sargent's idea. That was the first time that three voices had ever been blended like that before. It was difficult since it involved not only singing, but walking. We used a matte insert. It took a day and a half to do that. I regret that the sound is just OK. Murdo may have been responsible for that. He was Bing's sound man from radio. I think that at times the sound overpowered the singers. The balance of sound to singing was not too good.*

How was Bing to work with? *He was a joy, and ultra professional. He was always early. I'd say '9 or 10 am tomorrow, Bing?' and he'd say, 'Fine.' In fact, he was always ahead of time. If you would tell him to be at rehearsal at 6 am, he would show up at a quarter to six. In the afternoon, if we'd be waiting for the lighting or something of that nature, and he'd say, 'Hey, Wilbur'- he used to call me Wilbur - 'what time tomorrow?' I'd know he was tired. I'd say '10 am' and he'd say, 'You got it' and go home. That was the way he controlled what he had to do.* I asked Mr. Harbach how much rehearsal time was needed for the special. *Two weeks would be de rigueur.*

The ratings and the reviews were highly favorable. *Variety* on October 12, 1960 lauded ***the breezy continuity which didn't get in the way of the music*** and noted that ***the production numbers were imaginative without being pretentious.***

Mr. Rosenberg, with Crosby's approval, requested Mr. Harbach's services for the next Oldsmobile Show. *Well, my ego went right to the ceiling!* He immediately set himself the task of devising a novel framework for the assigned project.

All summer long I tried to come up with a smashing idea - not just another song and dance show. There's got to be some point to it. What can I do that is different? I was coming back from a weekend in Westhampton, Long Island. While passing La Guardia Airport – it's funny how you remember things – I said, 'I got it. I got the perfect show for Bing. Wham!' We would have Mr. England, Mr. France, and Mr. USA – Rex Harrison, Maurice Chevalier, and Crosby – singing about the women they have known and how they handled them.

Chevalier was thrilled by the suggestion and Harrison's people thought it was sensational because he hadn't done anything since the London production of My Fair Lady. Nothing much was going on with him professionally, and his agents thought that starring him with Bing and Maurice would put him right back. Bing

reacted like a stage two rocket. He said, 'My God, What an idea.' Well, Rex wouldn't do it! He said, 'I can't sing like Bing.' I said, 'You don't have to – you just sing like you did in My Fair Lady.'

Harrison's agent said, 'Bill, you got to make Rex do it, for his own good.' I pleaded with Harrison, but he remained adamant. 'No, No, No – Crosby and Chevalier are too good. I'm not going to embarrass myself.' Well, my writers (Bill Morrow, Saul Ilson, and George Foster) *helped me create a show which became Mr. France and Mr. USA. Can you imagine what that show would have been like with the three of them? I get goose bumps just thinking of it.*

This tantalizing possibility was briefly entertained, but Mr. Harbach was assured that, even without Mr. England's participation, the show remains a triumph of showmanship and style, notwithstanding the involvement of singer Aldo Monaco.

Aldo Monaco had nothing to do with Crosby and Chevalier – or anything! Bing had heard him in Venice and was so crazy about him, he promised him a spot. I didn't want to hurt Bing's feelings, but I had to tell him that Monaco had nothing to do with the original plan. After all, he was no match for the two stars, so he wasn't going to sing about his Italian girlfriends. Well, Bing insisted on featuring him. It killed me. I wanted the idea to stay close to the original. All that survived of it was the little black book medley.

Bill Harbach directs his stars

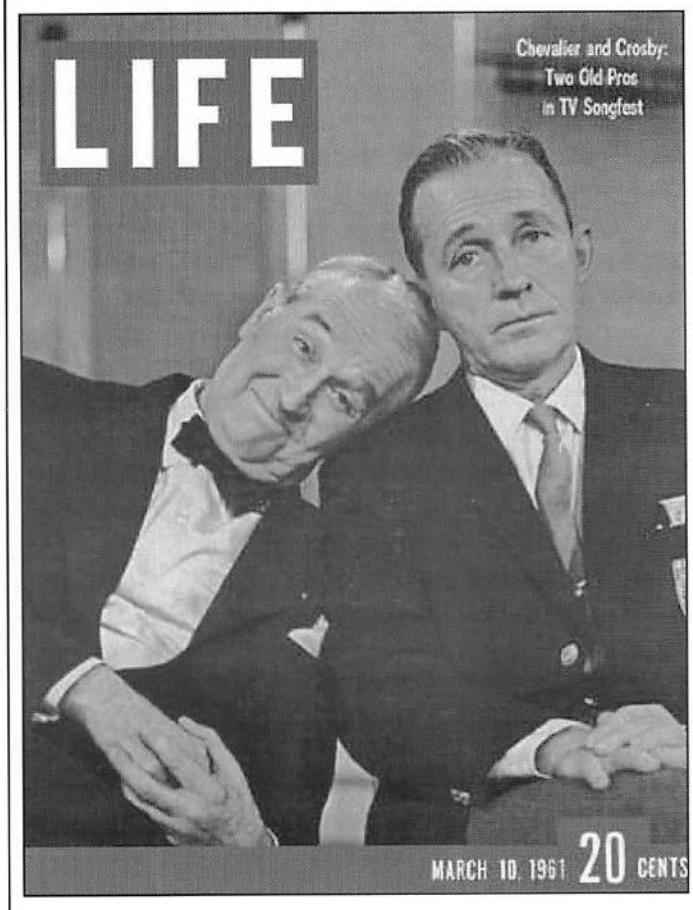
But what about the finale medley, which includes *September Song*, *Young at Heart*, *I'm Glad I'm Not Young Anymore* and concludes with *I Wish I Were in Love Again*? Didn't this impart a wistful accent upon the philandering theme? Mr. Harbach lit up. *Yes, Yes - and I thought I would use* ***Yesterdays*** *which dad wrote with Jerome Kern for Roberta. It perfectly wrapped up the whole concept.*

How did these two icons get along? *Bing and Maurice hit it off from the very first day of rehearsals. Maurice politely said, 'Bing, it's so nice to see you.' 'You too, Maurice.' They got along beautifully.* At this point in our discussion, Mr. Harbach produced a photo of him giving directions to a grinning Crosby and laughing Chevalier. There is no better example of the comity that existed among the three men.

Bing enjoyed working with Carol Lawrence on the previous show, so he wanted lightning to strike twice. Hugh Lambert was hired to choreograph. His dancers were frequently featured on The Ed Sullivan Show. I signaled out *Flattery*, a number which displays the terpsichorean talents of Crosby and Lawrence. *Oh, Bing moved so well. He was a very good dancer.* ***But then, he could do anything well.***

Bing also wanted Nelson Riddle to work again on this show since he was so pleased with his work. Incidentally, Nelson thought that choral voices were needed, especially for Chevalier. Mr. Harbach mentioned that Henry Mancini's wife, Virginia, was a member of the chorus which Joseph Lilley assembled.

Mr. Harbach is justly proud of this special. *Do you know that we made the cover of Life Magazine?* Mr. Harbach showed me a facsimile of the March 10, 1961 issue which showcased Crosby and Chevalier on the cover, heralding, ***Two Old Pros in TV Songfest.***



This certainly was no hype. Broadcast on March 20, 1961, it garnered high ratings. The March 22 issue of *Variety* offered this rave.

Bing Crosby keeps topping himself. His latest semi-annual ABC-TV romp…was a zestful fast hour with wit, warmth, and good humor. Bill Harbach and his three writers played the hour as a sort of 'fun with music' show. The Crosby-Chevalier pairing played off, incandescently.

This sublime amusement ended Crosby's contractual obligation for Oldsmobile. It would take the Jerry Lewis debacle to cause their professional paths to re-converge.

The Hollywood Palace

One day in mid-November, 1963, Nick Vanoff received a frantic call from ABC. Mr. Harbach remembers it well.

ABC knew that Nick was free since The Perry Como Show went off the air for good in June. They pleaded with him. 'The Jerry Lewis Show is going down in flames. We don't know what to do! Can you come out to Hollywood and fill this goddamn time slot. We'll figure out what to do with our time next season. At least finish out the fourteen weeks that are left in this season.' There was one proviso - that whatever he came up with should be entertainment of the old school.

Nick immediately consulted me. We decided to tackle it. Nick came up with an idea. ***'Let's do a vaudeville show!*** *The Lawrence Welk Show would lead into it, so let's keep our show and hour, too. Make it very chic – and not like The Ed Sullivan Show where everything is basically worked-in-one, without much depth, in front of a sparkle curtain. And, most important, we'll have a different host each week, so that it will stay fresh.'*

I thought it was a perfect concept, especially since it would take care of the dilemma of what to do with The El Capitan Theater, which ABC had revamped and renamed The Jerry Lewis Theater. Jimmy Trittipo, one of the best set designers and art directors, would refurbish the house to give it a vaudeville ambience, putting in that great lighted proscenium and adding the runway. (Trittipo crafted the sparse and abstract sets for all the Oldsmobile shows, except the last) *We would call both the theater and the show The Hollywood Palace.*

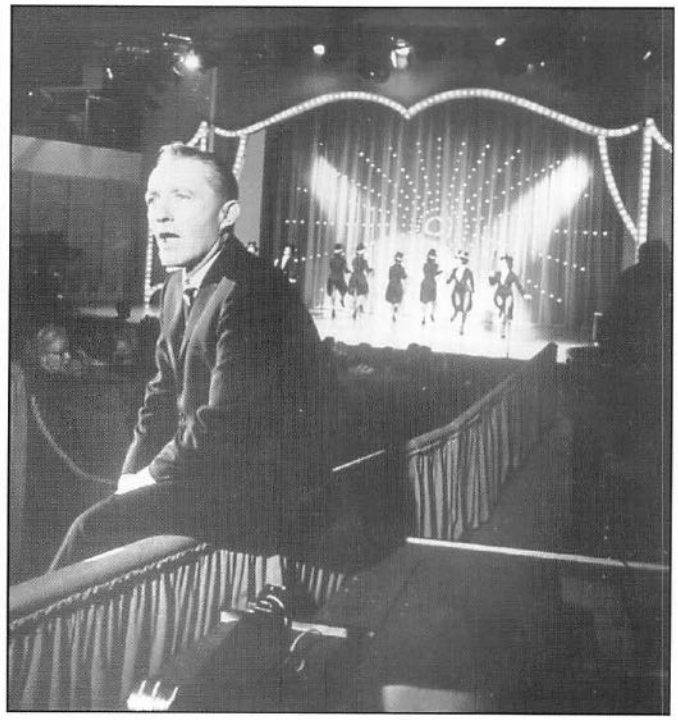
Nick added, 'I'll executive produce and you produce it.' I replied, 'We go as a team – fifty/fifty.' We formed Zodiac Productions. We flew to the west coast and spent four weeks of negotiations with the network. ABC liked the vaudeville idea, but wanted to hire a top star who would be the permanent host. They thought that an audience would not get used to the idea of a rotating emcee and would demand the same star coming into their living rooms every week. Well, Nick played hardball. 'OK, get yourself two other producers.' ABC caved, saying, 'OK, do it, but we think you're wrong.'

Of course, Nick called Bing. He had just produced and directed a special for Bing (The Bing Crosby Show of November 7, 1963) and there was one in the works. (The show for Lever Brothers of February 15, 1964) He *was nervous. After all, we could only pay $10,000. Nick asked, 'Would you do our first show?' Without hesitating, Bing said, 'Sure, for you kids, I'd love to.' Right away, we were on cloud nine!* ***After all, Bing was such a giant, so monumental and bigger than life.*** *We knew that he would be a pacesetter and soon other stars would fall in line, despite the fact that we couldn't pay big money. So, in order to save ABC from disaster we went out to Hollywood to complete the fourteen weeks - and stayed seven years!*

The directing chores for the first Palace fell to Mel Ferber, whose credits included *The Joey Bishop Show* and *My Favorite Martian.* Joe Bigelow (Cavalcade *of Stars*) and Jay Burton were tapped to write the script. It was taped on December 28, 1963 and broadcast on Saturday, January 4, 1964. *Put on a Happy Face,* selected as the HP theme song, ushered the unfolding spectacle.

I thought Johnny Mercer's Hooray for Hollywood would be a better selection, but Nick prevailed with a song written by his good friend Charles Strouse for Bye Bye Birdie.

This broadcast would prove to be uncustomary, inasmuch as Crosby didn't begin the proceedings with a tune; rather, he walked down a side aisle while a dance act was in progress on stage.(You can actually glimpse someone at a control board in the background) With great élan, Crosby uttered the following.



The first Hollywood Palace show.

Good evening. Good evening. I'm just delighted that I've been chosen as the fella to welcome you to this premiere performance of our little divertissement intime, or, if you will, vaudeville…Why don't we begin with the creed of all vaudevillians, those immortal words that go, 'Hello Joe, what do you know. Let's put

on a vaudeville show. Song and dance, I'll take a chance. OK professor, let's go.'

An impressive guest list of stars answered Bing's beck and call on that debut. The roster included Nancy Wilson, Bobby Van, Bob Newhart, Mickey Rooney, Gary Crosby, and The Young Americans. Of them, Mr. Harbach wryly remarked, *there was a lot of them – a whole state*. Of course there was the obligatory novelty act, in this case the Tahon Puppets. Crosby's enduring musical director John Scott Trotter was on hand. (Les Brown would serve in that capacity for the rest of the first season.)

Crosby and number one son Gary blended on *Teamwork*, from *The Road to Hong Kong*. How did Gary interact with his father? *Even with him there was a tension. I don't know how to put my finger on it.*

The finale was a stirring offering by Crosby and The Young Americans of *Climb Every Mountain*, and then a heartfelt peroration by the impeccable master of ceremonies.

I know the folks here in The Hollywood Palace are going to do their utmost to make things enjoyable for you here every Saturday night. Let's make it a happy year, a joyful year, and a year that will rate among the best of them all. I think the clue is really teamwork. Thank you.

Crosby's wish was fulfilled, and teamwork, indeed, became the hallmark for all the subsequent shows, both in front of and behind the scene. And the team that was most indispensable to the success of *The Hollywood Palace* was Harbach and Vanoff. The show was off and running, and by the end of the 63/64 season, to quote Mr. Harbach, the series had become ***the flagship of ABC, its glamour show.*** The gamble to emulate the old school of entertainment was paying off handsomely. The luster of the show was infinitely enhanced by Grey Lockwood, who was hired to direct. Lockwood had also been a veteran of *The Perry Como Show*, in addition to *Robert Montgomery Presents* and the 1954 and 1955 Oscar-casts.

Mr. Harbach explained one very amusing device used on the show. *In vaudeville, you would want everyone in the audience to know what was coming for that show. This was achieved by having a billboard girl come out to introduce the acts.* Mr. Harbach was responsible for the selection of Raquel Welch to perform that function. With just the slightest hint of boastfulness, Mr. Harbach said, *Yes, I did find her, after interviewing several starlets for that role. Bob Mackie designed her outfits. He also designed for a lot of the guests.* We both agreed that on certain shows, Ms. Welch might have trumped her co-stars.

Crosby sat out the HP for the rest of the season, his work schedule consumed with recordings, *Robin and the Seven Hoods*, and preparations for his new sit-com series, which would air on ABC during the 64/65 season, inaugurated by *ABC's Wide World of Entertainment*. This special, hosted by Crosby and aired on September 13, 1964, previewed many of the network's new programs, while welcoming back old favorites. It was taped at the HP Theater and very closely resembles a Palace. At first, Mr. Harbach could not recollect this program, but my prodding yielded results.

Martin listens to Bill Harbach.

Wait a second. We got Dwight Hemion to direct and Gary Smith to produce that season opener. I think it was the first time they teamed. That's the first time Gary ever produced a show. He had been a set designer. Yes, it was done at the Palace. Nick and I executive produced.

This illustrious duo of the TV variety format would follow in the footsteps of Messrs. Vanoff and Harbach, creating shows for Sinatra, Garland, and Streisand, as well as three outstanding Crosby specials: *Merry Christmas, Fred, From the Crosby's, The Bell Telephone Jubilee*, and *Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas.*

Crosby returned to the Palace for the second anniversary program of January 16, 1965, his only HP engagement of the second season. By now, Mitchell Ayres assumed the role of musical director, as he had for Perry Como. This was the first Crosby-hosted HP which bore the clarion delivered by announcer Dick Tufield: ***From Hollywood, the heart of the entertainment world, The Hollywood Palace, with your host, Bing Crosby!*** These words, exclaimed with such exuberance, would fill this fan with immense anticipation. *Yes. We thought Dick was marvelous, with that booming, clear voice.*

By the 1965/66 season, Crosby's Palace stints began in earnest. In total, he emceed an unrivalled 31 times, including all of the anniversary shows, as well as every Christmas show, save 1969. Mr. Harbach had not realized that the time honored tradition of the Crosby family television yuletide show originated with the HP.

The HP was twice nominated for the Emmy Award in the category of Outstanding Variety Series, for the 65/66 and 66/67 seasons. It lost on both occasions to *The Andy Williams Show*, which, incidentally, was produced by Bob Finkel, who produced a lion's share of Crosby's post-Harbach television efforts.

Each Crosby Palace ended with a special treat. As he walked off the stage and the lights dimmed, he would be seen in silhouette, executing some sort of athletic stage business, either kicking one of his legs or arching his torso, usually ending with a droll pantomime of a feigned back-ache. This enchanting chicanery would afford one last taste of the inimitable star before he disappeared until the next show. ***That was pure Bing. Nobody could have told him to do that. Absolutely delightful.***

Was there ever any trouble with Crosby? *Are you kidding? He was so easy. Although there was one moment - We were rehearsing, and we had the air conditioning high. Bing came in with his collar turned up and cried,* ***'Jesus Christ, you could hang meat in this place!'***

Crosby's remarkable use of language on the HP was an endless source of inspiration. What other host would incorporate words like *contumely* or phrases like *roundelay of jocosities* in their parlance? Mr. Harbach concurred. *He could use words that long and get away with it. He would have you running to the dictionary. And he could rattle off fast lyrics like nobody else.*

Mr. Harbach had lots of fun during the annual Hollywood Palace parades. Crosby would usually be the grand marshal. *Bing would ride in a car with a lot of kids and he would be the host for the parade. That was done purely for publicity.*

Many new songs seemed to have been written for the Palaces. This was most apparent on the season openers. *I believe my associate producer Saul Ilson was responsible for many of those.* Saul Ilson had been writing for *The Danny Kaye Show*. He would later produce *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and the Arte Johnson special, *Ver-r-r-ry Interesting* on which Crosby appeared.

The audiences always seemed to be so attentive and so well dressed. *We would put the nicer looking people in the front of the house so that we could cut to a reaction.*

There were so many Crosby pairings with contemporary artists: Sonny and Cher, (*Nick Vanoff produced their show after the Palace series*) The Temptations, Roger Miller, Glen Campbell, Bobby Goldsboro, Jeannie C. Riley, Bobbie Gentry, and perhaps most memorable of all, Tiny Tim.

We loved to do that sort of thing. There used to be a regular feature in Vanity Fair called the impossible interview. For instance, Einstein and Mae West would be combined. How would they talk to each other? I loved to book that way - one from the old guard and one from the new. They all got along well together and had a ball.

Certainly one of Bing's most atypical guests was Senator Everett Dirksen. *We had to fly down to Miami to tape that speech he made.*

Crosby mingled with the crème de la crème of show business royalty on the HP. As an astonishing list of Crosby's guests was rattled off to him, each name evoked general praise, a laugh, a smile, but hardly any particular details came to his mind. *When I'm brushing my teeth, I'll say, 'Oh God, I should have told him that.' Right now, nothing's popping in.* He did inform me that Nick Vanoff was responsible for the four appearances which the King Family made with Crosby on the HP. Vanoff had been producing *The King Family Show* at the time. (Mr. Harbach is a font of anecdotes of many other stellar hosts and hostesses, and has vivid memories of, among others, Fred Astaire, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Judy Garland - but that's another story.)

However, Mr. Harbach does remember one particular Crosby duet - the one with Johnny Mercer from May 21. 1966. It is his personal favorite. *Herb Sargent was responsible for that. He came up with the gimmick to have Bing stump Johnny by singing phrases from other lyricists' songs, challenging him to come up with a similar lyric from his own pen. It was so darn clever and intricate, and it went on for about seven minutes. Terrific!* (Mr. Harbach screened this sterling specimen of virtuosity at the recent Crosby tribute held at The Players Club in Manhattan's Gramercy Park.)

On many of the Palaces, Crosby seemed to be lip-synching his opening number. *This was needed since the production numbers had a lot of dancing and moving. The duets and solos were done live.*

Mr. Harbach shed light on the HP rehearsal regimen. *After about two weeks of rehearsal, we would block everything, and then we would have just one dress rehearsal at 5pm, followed by what we called a complete show at 8pm. Whatever was the best performance would go into the finished tape three weeks later when you show it to the country. Be sure the handkerchief is right there for both shows so if you want to intercut a better moment here or a better step there, the continuity is the same. Nine out of ten times the aired show was played. Once in a while there would be a tiger act that was better in the dress rehearsal - so you'd just put that in.*

There has been some speculation due to a press release of the time that Crosby was to be the host for a HP to be aired November 23, 1968. There is no other record of this. *I'm sorry. I have no memory of that.*

The Palace did not switch from black and white to color until the beginning of the 65/66 season. Why the delay? *ABC was the last network, the bottom network. They went kicking and screaming into color. They had to. Everything was way ahead of them.*

At the beginning of the 67/68 season, the HP was moved from Saturdays to Tuesdays at 10 pm. Mr. Harbach thought that this did not bode well for the series. *ABC wanted to put another hot show in its place.* (*Iron Horse* with Dale Robertson) *The network was ruining a good thing. As soon as you start moving a show around that's when you start to fail. You have lost your lead-in and begin to lose your audience. We started*

to go down in the ratings. Some of the damage may have been undone when it returned to its Saturday perch the next year.

The final season saw some changes. *Grey Lockwood got sick and we got Marc Breaux to replace him. Marc was a brilliant choreographer, and Bing got along well with him, but then he got along well with everybody. It was always a piece of cake with Bing.* (Breaux had received high praise for his work on the films *Mary Poppins*, *The Sound of Music*, and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*)

And sadly, Mitchell Ayres was replaced during the final season by Nick Perito, yet another Como associate. *Mitch was working in Las Vegas. The Palace was off for the season. He was with a girl singer. They had gone to dinner. They were crossing the street. A drunk driver came screaming down the street. There was no way he could get out of the way, but he took the girl and threw her into the air. The car hit and killed him. I received a call at three in the morning from the head of the musicians' union. I was sleeping on my boat at the marina. He said 'you won't believe it but Mitchell Ayres has just been killed.'* ***Bing was devastated.***

Inevitably The HP, a bastion of shimmering old style entertainment had to fall victim to the impending cultural coarsening that would soon take dominion over the media.

At the beginning of the 69/70 season, the ratings started to decline and we began having trouble with ABC. The network thought that what we were doing was old hat so they demanded guest approval. The writing was on the wall.

Nick Vanoff (left) with Bing and Bill Harbach.

One day, Nick and I were in an executive office at ABC. Barry Diller, one of the clique then running the network, said, 'We got to get more youth shows, more rock and roll.' Nick picked up the coffee table and slammed it. Nick and I said 'We're out.' Barry said that he was sorry; nevertheless, we weren't about to change the show for the kids, and get rock singers to host the show, for heaven's sake! When we were cancelled, Nick kept repeating, 'Mercy killing! Mercy killing!' I was really broken hearted. I had no regrets though. I would have paid to do what I did - to work every week with such great stars. There was talk about Bing continuing as permanent host, but we all thought that over thirty was enough for him.

The farewell show, broadcast on February 7, 1970, still elicits an emotional reaction from Mr. Harbach. *It was my idea to have an empty theater and for Bing to open and close the show with "Until You've Played the Palace." I thought this would be an appropriate time to review the history we captured on our stage, so we showed highlights and out-takes from the past seven seasons. What stars we had! You could never duplicate that today.* ***And Bing - he was the epitome of elegance and poise.***

The last seconds of this valedictory show were devoid of Bing's high stepping hi-jinks. A most comforting respite from the turbulent sixties came to an end with just a dignified, almost solemn, exit.

Mr. Harbach was hopeful that the HP would enjoy new audiences through re-packaging. *We were Ed Sullivan West. No show had so many stars, with such great style, sets, and lighting. I wish that ABC would release all the episodes. I wanted to sell the idea of a compilation series, a sort of 'Best of' series. I even got Jack Lemmon to consent to host. Unfortunately, all the networks were being run by kids.* He was disappointed with the two retrospectives hosted by Suzanne Somers in the early nineties. *It's sad. Nobody appreciates these legends anymore.*

With The HP behind them, the indefatigable entity known as Harbach and Vanoff continued to soar, co-producing such unforgettable examples of this now-vanished genre as *The Julie Andrews Show* (Emmy winner: Outstanding Variety/Music series 72/73) and *Gypsy in my Soul*, starring Shirley MacLaine. (Emmy winner: Outstanding Comedy, Variety or Music special 75/76).

We are also in Mr. Harbach's debt for specials starring, to name but a few, Bob Hope, (a two-hour special in 1981 with President Ford and his 1982 Thanksgiving special) Milton Berle, and Don Adams. He also served as consultant for the first three *Kennedy Center Honors,* which were overseen by Nick Vanoff and George Stevens, Jr.

Other Accomplishments with Crosby

For most of the run of the HP, Mr. Harbach did not undertake other television ventures. *I had too much to do to keep the balls in the air for the Palace.* However, this situation changed as the HP began its 6th season, at which time Messrs. Harbach and Vanoff collaborated on *The Bing Crosby Special* for RCA, broadcast on NBC on

October 23, 1968. It starred Bob Hope, Stella Stevens, (*a little bland*) Jose Feliciano, (*a new sound*) and The Supremes.

Bing & The Supremes

Nick and I were executive producers. It was produced by Ray Charles. Ray was another alumnus of The Perry Como Show. He produced the choruses for Perry. He put the show together. Marc Breaux directed. (Breaux would also direct Crosby the following year in *Goldilocks*) *I supplied the idea of Bing and Bob getting back into the movies. In fact, Ray Charles wrote a song, Making Movies, to go along with the concept. He also wrote the Crosby/Hope duet. (Believe Me) I don't recall why, but the show was filmed at nighttime. The wonderful That Face/Funny Face number, in which Bing is on a cheery picker serenading pictures of all the great film stars, was done at 11pm!* Did Bing balk at that? *Not at all!*

As the HP entered the homestretch, this twosome again merged with Crosby for *Bing and Carol - Together Again for the First Time.* This was aired on December 17, 1969 and starred Carol Burnett, Juliet Prowse, and Roy Clark. Oddly enough, it filled the Crosby Christmas Show void created when Perry Como was selected to host that year's seasonal HP edition. In fact, this was the first Crosby holiday program since 1962 to be aired outside the aegis of the Palace.

Nick and I produced, and we got Grey Lockwood to direct. Nick Perito worked on the musical arrangements. John Scott Trotter led the orchestra. This would be the last professional association between Crosby and Trotter, ending an incredibly prolific relationship which went back over thirty years.

Mr. Harbach's last professional encounter with Crosby came in 1970 when Nick Vanoff and he executive produced the all-star flag-waver, *Sing Out Sweet Land*, hosted by John Wayne. Broadcast on NBC on November 29, 1970, this show was the most highly budgeted video venture up to that time, with Budweiser laying out two million dollars. The expenditure was well worth it since this show brought in an amazing 39.3 rating and approximately seventy seven million viewers. It features a vignette, introduced by Wayne, starring Crosby, incarnating Mark Twain, and Roscoe Lee Browne, portraying abolitionist Frederick Douglass, both engaged in a discussion about civil rights. Mr. Harbach had all but forgotten this fascinating tableau. *Thank you for reminding me of that! I now recall Bing all dressed up with that wig and moustache– a spitting image of Twain!*

An Enduring Friendship

Throughout these professionally productive years, a close friendship flourished between Mr. Harbach and Crosby. *He would take me to football games. He'd say. 'Hey, Wilbur, do you want to see UCLA play?' A chauffeur would pick us up and we would go to the bowl. One year we went to the Ascot Races.* He shared a snapshot of the two Beau Brummels clad in full regalia for the occasion.

Bing & Bill Harbach at Ascot Races.

There were other fun-filled moments like these, such as Crosby's 65th birthday in 1968.

I went down in my sailboat to Las Cruces, Mexico for the party. Bing chartered a DC-3 plane and brought down Henry and Virginia Mancini and Edgar and Frances Bergen, among others. We stayed for eight days. I saw Bing play golf there. He had the most natural swing.

Had Crosby and he ever corresponded? Mr. Harbach's reply to the query was charmingly flippant. ***No, I can't spell.***

When was the last time he saw Crosby? *I went to see him at an afternoon rehearsal for his benefit show at*

Philharmonic Hall at Lincoln Center in December, 1976.

Nowadays, Mr. Harbach, an avid yachtsman, and his wife Barbara divide their time between Fairfield, Connecticut and Palm Beach, Florida. He has always been deeply committed to maintaining his father's celebrated heritage, while keeping his own legacy alive through speaking engagements. Memoirs might not be far off. For several years he produced and directed ASCAP celebrations for such music masters as Ira Gershwin, Arthur Schwartz, Harold Arlen, Arthur Schwartz, Irving Berlin, and his beloved Johnny Mercer. He still suffers the loss of Nick Vanoff, who died in 1991.

In 2004, he was the executive producer of *Christmas at The Hollywood Palace*, a PBS review which utilized clips as well as his on-camera commentary, along with that of Felicia Vanoff, (his dear friend's widow) Nick Perito, (who passed away in the summer of 2005) and Kathryn, Mary and Harry Crosby.

After almost two hours of my most rapt attention, Mr. Harbach had to excuse himself. *My dear friend Elaine Stritch is opening tonight at the Carlyle Café. I owe it to her to attend.*

We bade each other goodbye, but not before deep appreciation was expressed for his abundant patience, hospitality, and nearly perfect recall - and for the hours upon hours of entertainment he provided.

Upon returning home, a review of selected Crosby/Harbach outings ensued. On so many long-ago programs a non-pareil troubadour and bard commanded the stage, thrilling his legions of devotees and broadening his appeal to a new generation of followers. These cherished productions furnished Bing Crosby with a decade's worth of glittering settings for his many talents, while enlightening and nourishing my childhood and adolescence. We were both beneficiaries, in no small measure, of a man possessed of the highest artistic standards and brimming with boundless taste and savoir faire; a deus ex machina named William Otto Harbach.

I am grateful to Malcolm Macfarlane for assistance with the research for this article.

Martin McQuade

(Editor: What a fascinating article! And Martin's not finished yet. Read on!)

Rise Stevens Salute

On January 9th, 2006 at The Rose Theater of Lincoln Center, yours truly had an opportunity to meet another force in Bing Crosby's life when The Metropolitan Opera Guild and Opera News hosted an evening entitled, *Rise Stevens: an American Beauty.*

The festivities began with an address by former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

I came from a family of opera lovers, and I cherish my boyhood memory of seeing Rise Stevens perform at The Met. I fell in love with her when I saw her co-star with Bing Crosby in a film that has now become a classic – Going My Way.

Immediately after his honor's remarks, the silenced audience was treated to two scenes from the film: Crosby's and Stevens' first encounter, followed by the mezzo-soprano's majestic rendition of *Habanera* from Bizet's *Carmen.*

Later on, the master of ceremonies, Van Cliburn, echoed Mr. Giuliani by saying that seeing *Going My Way* as a child was instrumental in cultivating his deep admiration for the diva.

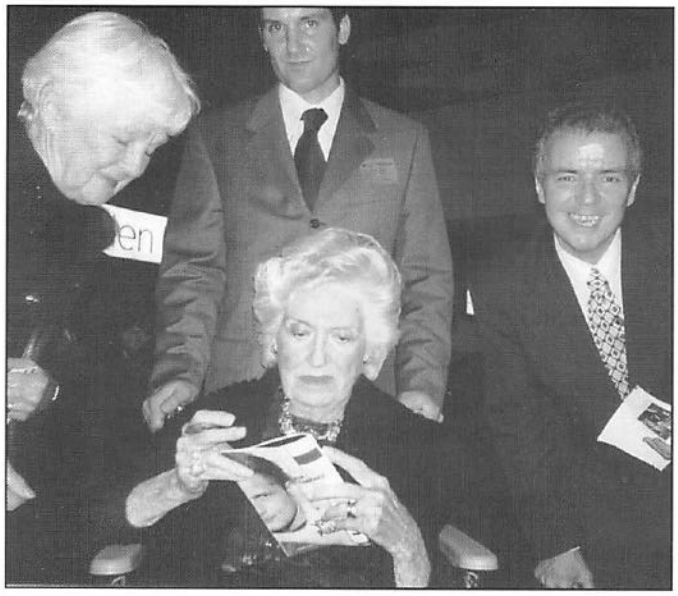
Mr. Cliburn informed us that prior to *Going My Way*, Ms. Stevens had, in 1941, co-starred with Nelson Eddy in MGM's *The Chocolate Soldier.* The success of this motivated Louis B. Mayer to order more operatic roles for her. He was determined to fashion her into *a musical Garbo.* Ms. Stevens would have none of it.

However, her husband and manager, Walter Surovy, arranged for her to star in Paramount's *Going My Way.* More information was provided in the program.

> *It was also Walter's idea for Rise to sing the Habanera from Carmen in the hit movie Going My Way (1944) with Bing Crosby and Barry Fitzgerald, anticipating accurately that he could force the Met into including the Gypsy in Rise's next contract, something Edward Johnson* (general manager of the Met at the time) *was reluctant to do...it worked. On December 28th, 1945, Rise sang her first Met Carmen.*

So, in a way, *Going My Way* was directly responsible for Rise's signature role at the opera house.

At the conclusion of this memorable testimonial, which also included Kitty Carlisle, a radiant Ms. Stevens took the stage to express her thanks. Afterwards there was a champagne reception, at which the legend was presented with a tape of the *Kraft Music Hall* of November 23, 1944 on which she appeared. She seemed transported back in time as she was handed this treasure. She kindly signed two pieces of sheet music: the familiar one of the title song of GMW, and a rarer one of *Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's an Irish Lullaby)* which prominently features her along with Bing.



Martin (far right) waits to talk to Rise Stevens.

She was asked to sum in one sentence how she felt about Bing.

I loved him - I simply loved him.

After a few glasses of the bubbly, the courage to speak to her again was mustered. *Ms. Stevens, I remember that you once remarked that Bing could have been an opera singer if he wanted to.*

Oh no! Bing just wanted to do his own thing, and that was to sing in that own marvelous way of his.

One more comment was irresistible.

Ms. Stevens, when I saw Bing on opening night at the Uris back in 1976, you were seated right in front of me. The whole show was partially framed by your chignon. (The Mannes School of Music, which Ms. Stevens at the time served as president, received proceeds from Crosby's Uris engagement.)

She beamed that famous infectious smile at me. The *Ave Maria* beat within my heart.

Martin McQuade

Arne Fogel Entertains

Yes, that fella in the Twin Cities is at it again! On January 8, he headlined a show in Bloomington, near Minneapolis called *BingSongs!* Accompanied by Maud Hixson, and special guest Prudence Johnson, Arne tells us that the show went very well, despite a shortage of rehearsal time leading up to the event. It not only sold out, but they turned away 50 people at the door! Everyone sang well, and in so doing a lot of attention was paid to Bing in the local media. Arne intends to do the show again, making it an on-going feature for various large and small venues.

Arne also used the event to help publicise his new radio show called "The Bing Shift", heard every Saturday night at 8pm (central standard time) on Jazz 88, KBEM-FM, Twin Cities. It can also be heard on the Internet at www.jazz88fm.com and the weekly playlist appears on Arne's website - www.arnefogel.com - the following week.

Rhythm On The River in Syracuse

As snow gently fell – as is typical for the time of year in Syracuse, NY – 50 classic film buffs (twice the usual attendance!) enjoyed the holiday show of the Syracuse Cinephile Society on Monday, December 5, *Rhythm on the River*. New ICC member and lifelong Bing Crosby fan Gerry Orlando introduced the 1940 film with a terrific story of Bing's allegiance to his friends - past and present – by linking his band-singing days with his radio shows and films. Harry Barris and Wingy Manone, John Scott Trotter and Ken Carpenter all had featured roles in this charming film. Mary Martin, after her role in this film with Bing, was brought on as Bing's featured female singer at the Kraft Music Hall and followed up with *Birth of the Blues* with Bing in 1941. Judy Schmid displayed her Christmas-themed Bing memorabilia for the group, and read a Christmas greeting to the Cinephile Society from Kathryn Crosby. Crosby films are always the biggest draw for the weekly Cinephile group, bringing in younger folks. Recent Crosby-film attendees have included Judy's teenaged daughter and her friends as well as green-haired, pierced-nose college-aged film buffs, all who heartily applaud Bing's presence on the screen! The Syracuse Cinephile Society hosted Crosby friend Bob DeFlores in March 2003 during their annual three-day "Cinefest", which has a national following.

The local downtown movie palace, the former Loew's-Syracuse and now christened "The Landmark Theatre" featured *White Christmas* on Sunday, December 18. Despite its prevalence on television in the 1960s and into the '70s and '80s, and its availability on VHS and DVD, it still draws a crowd of 200-300 every time it plays at the 75-year-old movie palace!

It's wonderful how many towns and cities continue to honor Bing and his talents. How nice to see that Syracuse is also reaching out to younger audiences!

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50+ LPs inc. Jonzos 2-13, Live at the London Palladium, etc.

Many books inc. "Bing – A Diary of a Lifetime", "My Life With Bing" (Kathryn Crosby), "The One & Only Bing" (Bob Thomas), "The Crosby Years" (Ken Barnes, "Road To Hollywood" (Fred Reynolds).

Many Crosby magazines (inc. Crosby Voice, Crosby Collector)

10 videos, 41+ audio tapes.

60 78s

Please contact Joan direct.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal price. Also, there are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances. Finally, Michael has spare copies of some LP boxed sets of Bing material and he will be happy to make these available for nominal figures to members.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your requirements for Bing on DVD and video. See also www.FesFilms.com

Dave Hall, Flat 10, 68 Kingston Rd., Buckland, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 7PA, UK (Tel. 07709 699270)

Dave has many Bing items for sale plus a huge selection of vinyl featuring Billie Holiday, Perry Como, Kay Starr, Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald and many others. Contact him for details.

The Record Centre, 45-46 Loveday St., Birmingham B4 6NR, UK (Tel: 0121-359-7399, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Ray Purslow and his team are real supporters of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs (and LPs) contact Ray.

Redmond Nostalgia Company, P O Box 82, Redmond, WA 98073-0082, USA. (Tel: (425) 774-1819, Fax (425) 774-8076, web site: http://www.redmondnostalgia.com/

e-mail: redmondnostalgia@aol.com)

David Kiner offers a comprehensive list of 281 Bing Crosby CDs. Each CD is one hour long containing two 30 minute radio programs, unless otherwise noted. All programs have been professionally re-mastered for excellent sound quality. All CDs are professionally printed and come sealed in cases with printed inserts.

See the company's web site for details of what is available.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) http://www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for imported CDs from the UK and elsewhere.

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Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 426 Park Place Drive, Petaluma, California 94954-6647, USA (tel. [707] 762-5570 - e-mail bingsfriends81@sbcglobal.net –

website:

www.geocities.com/one_sonoma_rose/BingsHomePage.html

The Society celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

The Victorian Bing Crosby Society

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:

www.mcckc.edu/~crosby/

This is a wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/3754/bing.html

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698

e-mail: gerry@stonestreet13.freeserve.co.uk,

website:www.GnuDawn.co.uk/intune)

Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £17.40 for the UK, £21 for Europe and £30 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card. Highly recommended.

Memory Lane, P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England.(www.memorylane.org.uk

e-mail: mail@memorylane.org.uk)

Memory Lane is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - one of Britain's favourite vocalists. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus Picture Pages, CD and Cassette reviews, Readers letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A *"must"* for 78 RPM collectors. 3 First Class stamps (or 3 IRCs) will bring a sample copy and full details.

Vintage Record Mart, 'Sarsden', Lower Common, Aylburton, Nr. Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6DR, UK

This is a 32 page quarterly trading magazine for collectors of 78s. Annual subscriptions are UK £8, Europe £10.40, USA & Canada £12.20, Australia and New Zealand £12.80.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX, UK

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Denis Holland, 84A Wolverhampton Rd., Stafford ST17 4AW, UK (phone: 01785 213987).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

web site: http://www.dickhaymes.com/dhsociety/index.html

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: http://www.jolson.org/ - see also http://www.mikescaife.btinternet.co.uk/ for Mike Scaife's Scottish branch and his excellent Great Song Stylists website)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com , website: www.btinternet.com/~flias/)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-317743,
website: www.sinatra-ms.com/Sinatra.html)
Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

Books 'n' Bing

1. Troubadour – Bing Crosby and the Invention of Pop Singing

John Walton reviews the book by Norman Wolfe

'ROONEY BLASTS AMAZING 72nd MINUTE GOAL'

No, BING magazine has not suddenly expanded into a sports page. I wrote that to grab your attention. After all, every cub reporter is taught that you have to engage your audience at the outset by giving them the most exciting news first. Having got them hooked, you can then impart the less sensational stuff. And it's the same with writing a book. An eminent author said recently that he had to secure the attention of his readers in the first twenty pages or they would not read on.

Norman Wolfe is far too skilled a writer not to take this principle into due consideration. In fact in *Troubadour* he appears to hedge his bets by giving us not one but several potent starts. An account of the 'colourful line of pirates and pillagers' who were significant in Bing's ancestry is preceded by a several short essays, separated by central asterisks, which could each individually serve as the book's dramatic beginning.

There is a prologue with a highly dramatised description of Bing's death:

'The Appointment in Samara is kept on a soft verdant afternoon...'

'A few steps and he falls without a cry.'

'He is The Singer. He is Bing Crosby'

This begs a short digression. I was at a loss to fathom the author's intention in referring to Bing at various times as 'The Singer'. Is he trying to invoke parallels with Simon Templar as The Saint or Clark Kent as Superman? You know, the regular guy with the amazing alter ego? Or is it a device to establish the long-lens approach that turns out to be one of the best features of the book? Whatever the motivation, the continued

reference to Bing as 'The Singer' seems an unnecessary pretension, which detracts from the author's generally concise and objective approach.

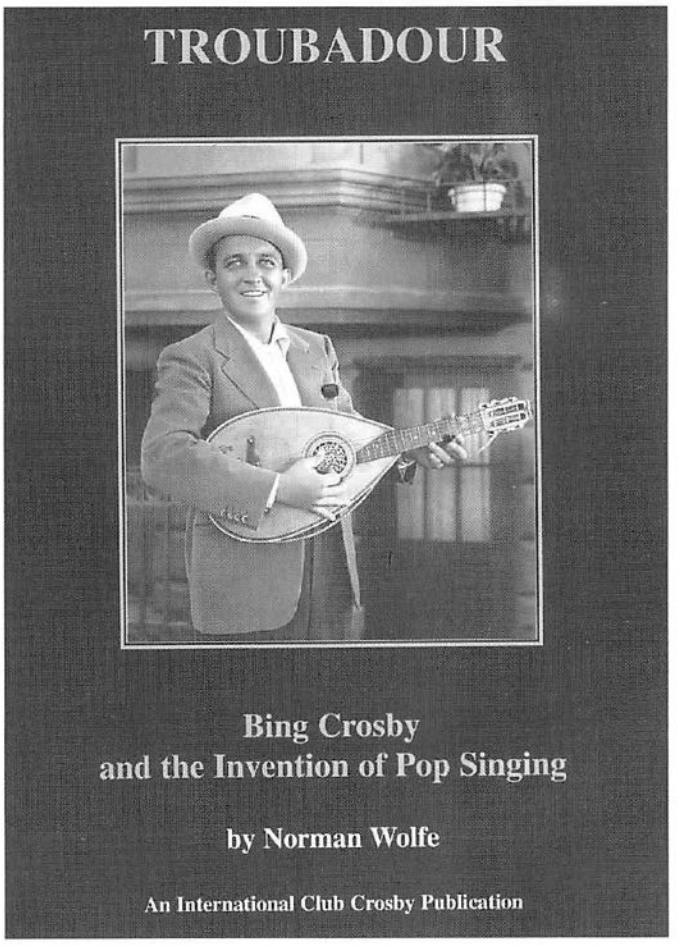
But to return to the 'essays'. Following the prologue, they cover, in order of sequence: Bing's embrace of the 'performance enhancing machines' in 1930; Bing in jail in 1929; 'the bad boy of music' whom nobody likes (still 1929); Bing as the most popular living person (1946); Bing's renewed unpopularity in 2000 after his eldest son has committed 'posthumous patricide.' We are then taken back to 1906 with a fine description of the San Francisco earthquake which itself would have made an excellent dramatic start:

'....the noise in the background is the city of San Francisco being advised by Mother Nature that it is unwise to erect big buildings over flawed ground.'

Then, after an evocative description of Spokane, featuring Catherine Helen Harrigan and Harry Lowe Crosby in the year of the quake, the author feels able to begin a well-researched description of Bing's ancestral background. The writing throughout all this is excellent; full of apt, imaginative and concise descriptions. But to me it feels as though the cub reporter had not only started with Rooney's 72nd minute goal but that he had treated us also to a bad foul in the 54th, a missed penalty in the 31st, a sending-off in the 89th and a bit of crowd trouble after the match, before finally embarking upon his essential report. (In the cause of fairness, I should point out here that I am often heavily censured for my aversion to episodic starts. I hated, for example, the beginning of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and see what a blockbuster that became!).

My other reservation about the book is inherent in its sub-title. A biography that covers the whole of Bing's life yet also deals with the 'Invention of Pop Singing' is likely to be chronologically skewed. By the time Bing got out of the 1930s, pop singing was pretty much invented. There was not much more to be said about it. Yet Bing had another 37 years to go and the biography was a long way from completion. The book is heavily weighted, therefore, in favour of Bing's earlier years. 120 pages take us to 1931, 261 pages to 1940, 343 pages to 1950, but there are only 58 more to cover the last 27 years of Bing's life. Admittedly, his recording career was in decline, but he was still very active on a number of fronts.

The meticulously researched detail of the earlier years - I particularly enjoyed Mr. Wolfe's account of the part Bing played in the foundation and success of the Decca Record Company - makes excellent reading both for Bing fans and for music historians. The 'invention of pop singing' element acts as an excellent counter against the biographer's problem of how to avoid the usual catalogue of anecdotes. Even when the 'invention' part dies away, the book is well sustained by the author's thematic approach, but lacks the substance of earlier chapters. With Bing's later years almost appearing to be an 'afterthought', the effect is one of anticlimax.



Structural and 'episodic' considerations apart, however, Norman Wolfe's book has much to commend it. Nowhere, for example, have I gained such a clear insight into 'Bing Crosby the Business'. Previous books have interpreted the twists and turns in Bing's career in terms of his personality quirks, depicting him as a saint, sinner and many things between. By representing him as a clear-eyed businessman, with the needs of associates to consider, the author places implicitly into perspective the stories about how Bing had spurned this former friend or had failed to help that old buddy. We are left wondering why it is we were ever fooled into trying to understand Bing's life as if it had been really led by the media 'troubadour'. It's a testament to the power of Bing's professionalism that even we Crosby enthusiasts need Norman Wolfe to make it clear for us.

Mr. Wolfe has come under some criticism in Crosby circles for even acknowledging the Shepherd and Slatzer book, long derided by Bing fans and indeed close members of Bing's own family. What he has in common with *The Hollow Man* authors, however, is his capacity for arduous, detailed research. That the vilified pair chose to overlay this with sustained detrimental spin, discrediting itself through its very consistency, is nothing to do with Norman Wolfe. Where he comments on Bing's nature, his balanced conclusions carry a ring of truth. He mentions the 'cold blue eye', as Bing himself described it, but also leaves us with the

reassuring conclusion that Bing's on-screen character was a part of him too. His stories of Bing's relationship with Dixie, and of her decline into loneliness, alcoholism and eventual illness carry particular poignancy that seems to owe much to his having interviewed Gary. On Gary's own book, he again encourages a balanced perspective through his sound research and clear explanation of how Gary's work came to be so vitriolic.

It's only fair to mention here the 'correction' posted on Steven Lewis's Internet Museum message board by Bing's nephew, Howard Crosby. Howard believes that Norman Wolfe was relying too heavily on Gary's testimony when he stated that Bing and his brother Ted (Howard's father), never reconciled after a falling-out in 1946. Howard points out that they did actually make up in 1962. While on the subject of Ted Crosby, Howard once posted on the board a very erudite article written by Ted on the changing perceptions of art in the post-war years. Its academic level certainly gives the lie to Norman Wolfe's assertion that, in his college years, Bing's 'vocabulary quickly exceeded those of his parents and siblings.' There seems to be at least one sibling who wasn't outstripped in that department!

Norman Wolfe is one of many who believe Bing's best years as a singer were the early years. He quotes *New York Times* critic, Clive Barnes, who commented that Bing 'paid in blood' to maintain his relaxed persona when, in the author's words, he 'no longer sang well'. He mentions too that Bing was not singing as well in the forties as in the thirties, and quotes Bing's letter to John Scott Trotter in 1954, where Bing explains away the deterioration in his singing as down to a lack of interest. He hardly mentions Ken Barnes' role in the revival of Bing as a singer in the seventies and the wonderfully successful concerts at that time. Yet, paradoxically, he refers to Bing in the seventies as 'still sounding better than anyone else'. In this area alone does the author desert his objectivity. Arguments constantly flourish on Steven Lewis's 'message board' about Bing's best era; the debate will never be resolved.

In spite of the one or two reservations I have expressed, I would unhesitatingly recommend *Troubadour* to any Bing fan and indeed any music historian. The extensive bibliography included by the author indicates the depth of his research and it supports a writing style that is concise, sophisticated and at times very entertaining. I would suggest that the book should be approached as two volumes: the first a meticulously crafted work taking Bing and pop singing from the beginning to 1950; the second a well written commentary throwing some extra light on Bing's later life. And, when you have read the book, the author's thematic, 'episodic' approach, irritating for me at the start, actually becomes an advantage. Norman Wolfe has conceived his themes with great clarity. He has made it easy for us to jump back into any section at speed by following the 66 sub-titles into which Bing's life, through his eyes, is divided.

John Walton

Thanks, John, for your thoughtful and thorough review of this excellent book. Other members' comments include:

"I thoroughly enjoyed the book, which I found fascinating in the extreme. I felt the author gave a very fair assessment of Bing's life, and did not downgrade him, as so many others seem to do, because of his early life style. I could not put the book down, even when the ICC magazine was delivered, and just had to read on to the finish!" (Roger Addey)

"I have just finished Norman Wolfe's 'Troubadour' and have to say that it is a compelling read with so much behind the scenes stories and details of the Crosby legend. I suppose the final image that Wolfe leaves you with is of a somewhat deep, reserved individual blessed with a unique voice and what Basil Grillo his accountant called 'That friggin Irish charm'. To learn that his finances were in such a mess was surprising to say the least, as is the decision he made to restrict his recordings in 1935 for fear that the public would become jaded with hearing so much of him on the air. When you think of the songs he could have recorded in that year....ah well! I thought Gary Giddins had written the definitive biography of Bing but he must now share that honour with Norman Wolfe." (Mike O'Donoghue)

"I'm greatly enjoying reading Norman Wolfe's excellent book." (Ken Brown)

"As you know, I ordered a copy of Norman Wolfe's new Bing bio, and I am really enjoying it and have been very impressed by the many new facts and interpretations of events in Bing's life that he has come up with. He seems to write in an interesting fast moving style which seems to take the reader along for the ride. I would think that an article by Mr. Wolfe on his writing of the book might be a good addition to a future BING magazine." (Bob Larsson)

"I thoroughly enjoyed *Troubadour*. Wonderful reading, especially the in-depth background to Bing's early radio work." (John Davis)

"I thought it quite wonderful, far and away the best yet on Bing. Very informative and with the balance between the human being and the greatest entertainer just perfect. I still think more time should have been devoted to the last few years, but this is a small criticism compared to the overall book." (Pat Forster)

"I spent many an hour reading the absorbing *Troubadour* by Norman Wolfe. What a terrific book." (John Bignell)

"My children bought me a copy of Norman Wolfe's book for Christmas and I've written a letter telling him how much I enjoyed it." (Graham Pascoe)

John Walton referred to the comments seen on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum including some from Bing's nephew, **Howard Crosby,** who said:

> I just started reading the new biography of Bing entitled *Troubadour*. So far it seems pretty good, but I'll alert you all to any obvious mistakes.
>
> Number One: Early in the book, the author implies that Kate thought Bing might someday become a priest. Not true....that was the role that Kate had carved out for my Dad, Ted.
>
> Number Two: The author states that Dixie died at a young age due to her excess drinking. I was not aware of any evidence whatsoever linking alcoholism to the onset of cervical cancer...
>
> OK, I have now finished Norman Wolfe's book. He doesn't really have a great deal to say about events after 1950, so we will still be waiting for Mr. Giddins for the definitive work. Overall, though, the book was pretty good and offered some interesting insights.
>
> Another glaring error: Wolfe states that after the dispute between Ted and Bing in 1946, they remained estranged for the rest of their lives. Not true! They completely reconciled in 1962, visited each other several times during those years, stayed at their homes, etc.

Steven Lewis contributed some thoughts too, stating that:

> "Alcohol abuse and cigarette smoking are major risks factors for many **cancers**, especially if they are combined, which apparently they were with Dixie."

And he went on to quote from several learned reports on the matter.

I passed on the various comments on his book to **Norman Wolfe** and he replied:

> *". . . I used the term 'The Singer' simply because I am uncomfortable calling him Bing, as most biographers do, and did not want to keep repeating Crosby. Bing is too informal for me. No deeper than that.*
>
> *The chief recurrent criticism of the book is that I do not devote enough attention to Crosby's later life, the postwar years. That is a viable point and I concede it but it was a conscious decision. I felt the action, the fun, the color were in the early years, the prewar years to be exact and those paralleled his ability and power. Perhaps I was wrong but it was deliberate, not a mistake.*
>
> *I probably did forfeit my objectivity in evaluating Crosby's work late in his career. But perhaps it wasn't so much as losing my objectivity as it was not doing my homework! However, I am grateful for all the analysis which I find very helpful indeed. May I also express my thanks to the ICC for publishing the book in the first place. It was a brave decision!"*
>
> ***Norman Wolfe***

Don't delay if you want a copy of *Troubadour*. There are only a few left.

Incidentally, here's the latest news from **Gary Giddins** about his book:

> *My book is a long way down the line, as I am currently working fulltime on a music text book and another project that are paying the bills since I left the Voice. No one is less pleased with this state of affairs than me, as I would like nothing better than to clear my desk of all diversions and work exclusively on Bing—especially after my week in Hillsborough. What I can tell you is that Mrs. Crosby could not have been more gracious or helpful. We spent several hours a day at her breakfast table, poring through boxes of correspondence, photographs, and other papers, focusing mostly on the 1940s, stacks of which she allowed me to borrow (even loaned me a suitcase for transport)—I have been copying and collating ever since. Much of this material concerns Bing's activities during the war. I think even his staunchest admirers will be moved and surprised by his selfless devotion to the armed forces in this period. I certainly was—a couple of times, we were nearly in tears reading some of these letters and listening to his Dictaphone belts. When I learned a decade ago that the returning American troops voted him the man who had done the most for morale (in the last issue of Yank), I was confused as to how he came to top FDR, Hope, Ike, etc. No more. Crosby was indefatigable, and the war changed him profoundly. Though he showed no interest in continuing, as Hope did, to entertain the armed forces (he was, however, planning a tour of the Eastern theater, after his hugely successful visit to England and France), his work during WWII remains exemplary and inspiring.*
>
> ***Gary Giddins***

2. The Meaning Of Recognition: New Essays 2001-2005

By Clive James, published by Picador, hardcover 400 pages ISBN: 033044025X. Price: £14.99

Frank Startup of Cirencester in Gloucestershire in the UK, sent in an interesting extract recently. Let's quote from his letter.

"I bought Clive James's new book of essays, "The Meaning Of Recognition", being something of an admirer of his writing, and found within an essay called "The Hidden Art of Bing Crosby" which I've photocopied and enclose here. It was, apparently, first published in the Times Literary Supplement and contains some rather odd interpretations and assertions, but as a typically idiosyncratic view, it is rather interesting."

Your Editor agrees with Frank and we hope to publish an extract from the essay (which was written at the time of the BBC radio documentary about Bing in 2003) in our next issue.

3. Gloria Jean: A Little Bit of Heaven

by Scott and Jan MacGillivray, hardcover: 346 pages, published by iUniverse, Inc. ISBN: 0595674542, $32.95 (hardcover)

Scott and Jan MacGillivray of Massachusetts have written a new biography of Gloria Jean which has just been published. The authors wrote to tell us that: "We thought you and your fellow Bing Crosby admirers might be especially interested in knowing about this, because (as you might imagine) Mr. Crosby figures quite prominently in the book. A full chapter is devoted to the film *If I Had My Way* and there are numerous first-person recollections by Gloria that we think Bing's fans will enjoy. The book is available in both paperback and hardcover editions."

Celluloid Crosby

I was most impressed with the scope of the Lincoln Centre's retrospective "What a Swell Party This is: A Salute to Bing Crosby" covered in the last issue of BING. I would have gladly sat through the entire programme even if some of the films were overly familiar. There is an added appeal when a movie is shown on a big screen and you can share the experience with a like minded audience. The highlight for me would have been the so far unseen (by me) *High Tor*. It took me years to track down a vinyl copy of the Brunswick album and I never believed the original TV movie would ever be re-screened. Indeed, it wasn't the original television version which was screened at the Lincoln Centre but an enhanced/extended version. I would also have liked the opportunity to re-evaluate *High Time*. It's now heading for its fiftieth birthday and I last saw it on television over thirty years ago.

When a retrospective is put together there will always be disappointments unless the complete output of an artiste is programmed. This would be an impossibility as far as Bing's forty-five year cinematic contribution is concerned. The selection committee were saddled with the daunting task of arranging the screening of two films a day for a week. No one could quibble with the inclusion of any one of the fourteen shown. But to my mind there was one significant omission. The top box-office draw of 1945 was not shown. Publicised with the tag line "Your heart will be wearing a smile", *The Bells of St. Mary's* outgrossed *Going My Way* and it would probably figure in the top ten of any list of favourite films drawn up by readers of this magazine. I will revisit RKO's money spinner in this article and look at peripheral issues rather than Bing's own contribution.

As with most films the casting process resulted in several changes between conception and shooting stage. Bing and Ingrid were the film's two certainties. Other parts were filled before filming commenced in February, 1945. In the previous November, a Los Angeles newspaper stated that Lillian Gish was being considered for a role. Presumably this would have been to play Sister Michael, a part eventually taken by Ruth Donnelly. Only a few days before filming commenced, director Leo McCarey approached M-G-M with a view to loaning that studio's up and coming starlet Elizabeth Taylor. She was to play the character of the fourteen year old Patsy Gallagher. She would have been right for the part but it went to Joan Carroll.

Father O'Malley with Joan Carroll.

One thing which remained unaltered was the film's title. That was taken from or was inspired by the 1917 song of the same name. The film guides don't mention two now obscure British films registered under the title *The Bells of St. Mary's* and there would be little chance

of the cinemagoing public being confused by the duplication. The first *Bells* was made at the end of the silent era in 1928 and starred the long forgotten Tubby Phillips and Barbara Hood. It was a comedy set in Sussex about a new parson fighting the local bully. A 1937 production of *The Bells of St. Mary's* might have resulted in some misunderstanding as it was an M-G-M production. The director was James A. Fitzpatrick, who spent thirty years making Fitzpatrick Traveltalks. These shorts were yawn provoking travelogues invariably ending with the sun going down over the horizon as we take our leave of beautiful/glorious/colourful wherever. Fitzpatrick came over to M-G-M's British studio to make a 44-minute feature which starred Kathleen Gibson and John Garrick. This time the story was set in Devon in 1880 and concerned a chorister returning from training in Rome to marry a sexton's daughter.

The Bells of St. Mary's made a bigger profit for RKO than any other film ever made by that studio. It took $8 million at the American box-office on its initial release. The box-office performance of *The Bells of St. Mary's* in the U.K. was not quite as successful as across the Atlantic. It was the second most popular film of 1946 after *The Wicked Lady.* Even so the Gaumont, Derby, admitted a record 46,000 patrons in one week, opening at 10a.m to accommodate audiences.

Director McCarey participated in the film's profit as was the case with his earlier Crosby hit *Going My Way.* That earlier film was one of the reasons why he was listed as the highest paid employee in the U.S. with an income in 1944 of over $1 million. With two similarly themed Crosby-McCarey collaborations it was necessary for the pair to have a good working relationship. McCarey had obviously studied the Crosby style. He said: "[Bing] represents a unique form of acting. He's a crooner but he has been a star for fifteen years. He must have something else besides a voice. Maybe the secret is that he's a good listener when someone else is talking." Audiences had to wait three years before McCarey's next film appeared. It was *Good Sam*, which did not pull in audiences in the numbers experienced with his two Crosby films. The reason for the long wait for a new film was McCarey's health. He was in a serious car accident in 1939 and one of the after effects was an increasing addiction to drink and drugs. Nevertheless, he managed another four feature films before his death in 1969.

The film had a life beyond its initial theatrical release. Bing was in two thirty minute radio adaptations, the first of which was broadcast on 26th August 1946, followed by another version on 16th October, 1947. These were in the Screen Guild Theatre series where performers were encouraged to pass their fees to the Motion Picture Relief Fund. That charity had benefited previously from several Crosby radio performances in the adaptations of "Holiday Inn", "Birth of The Blues" and "Going My Way" amongst others. Then, in 1959, there was an adaptation of *The Bells of St. Mary's* shown on U.S. television with Robert Preston and Claudette Colbert playing the Crosby/Bergman roles. A year previous to that television showing, the film was still receiving theatrical bookings in the U.K. It played for seven days, week commencing 7th April, 1958, at the Queens Cinema, Nelson. My last reminder of *The Bells of St. Mary's* was a brief sighting as a film within a film in the 2002 cinema release of *The Magdalene Sisters.* That film won the Venice Film Festival Golden Globe for its unsettling portrayal of the Catholic run Magdalene Laundries in the Irish Republic which imprisoned young women who were judged to be in moral danger. The film was set in the mid-1960s and in one laundry institution the inmates are given a Christmas treat. A projector is set up in the dining hall and *The Bells of St. Mary's* is shown.

Leaving aside the performance of the film's actors, critics noted the input of director and screenwriter. The film critic of the Hollywood Citizen News highlighted the naturalness of Dudley Nichol's dialogue and praised McCarey by writing: "If McCarey deserved an Academy Award before, he deserves something special for his handling of the sequence where the children stage their own version of the Nativity play." But significant Oscars were not to come the way of *Bells* despite no less than eight nominations. The only statuette won by the film was for Stephen Dunn's sound recording.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

ROAD PICTURES There were seven in the series: *Singapore, Zanzibar, Morocco, Utopia, Rio, Bali* and *Hong Kong.* Paramount produced all but the last which was made by Melnor films for release through United Artists. The only one in colour was *Bali. Hong Kong* was the only one with the definite article *The* in the registered title. Bing was joined by Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour in all of them, although Lamour was left with just a cameo appearance in *Hong Kong.* Plans were in place for *The Road to the Fountain of Youth* to be produced by Lew Grade with a script by Mel Shavelson at the time of Bing's death. Don Hartman was a Paramount contract writer who worked on the first four. He said:

> *You take a piece of chewing gum and flip it at a map. Wherever it sticks you can lay a Road picture, so long as the people there are jokers who cook and eat strangers. If they're nasty and menacing, it'll be a good Road picture. The key to the thing is menace off-setting the humour.*

When James Robert Parish interviewed Dorothy Lamour about the series she had this to say:

> *It was no mean feat to play cutesy while Crosby and Hope sallied wisecracks and slapstick back and forth. As*

the series developed my skills as a comedienne sharpened. I soon learned to put over my song numbers in mocking tones which gave them added zest. After the first Road film, I never studied dialogue. Never. I'd wait to get on the set to see what they were planning. I was the happiest and highest paid straight woman in the business.

The film's other co-star, Bob Hope, more or less confirmed the above. He wrote:

Dorothy is my nomination for one of the bravest gals in motion pictures. She stands there before the camera and ad-libs with Crosby and me, knowing that the way the script is written she'll come up second or third best in the end. But she fears nothing. Sometimes she'll do such things as add to the fun of the goings on by coming on the set with a couple of teeth blacked out, and she should be decorated for patience because when Bing and I are working on our lines for the next take, Dottie just stands there and listens.

But Lamour did a little more than stand and listen when she was a guest at Paramount's one-hundredth birthday party for Adolph Zukor. She made her entrance with two chimpanzees which she introduced as Bing and Bob. Unfortunately, as time passed she became less enamoured of Bing and by the time she made *Bali* she was not always thoughtful when making her views known.

Bing's comments about the series were always enthusiastic. This is what he said for a report in "Picture Show" magazine dated April 22nd, 1950:

Because "Going My Way" won an Academy Award for me, friends seem to think that this should have been the role I liked playing best. Far be it for me to imply that I didn't enjoy working with my old pal Leo McCarey. There's no greater guy in the community. But "Going My Way" was a pretty serious matter all the way through...Such was never the case on a Road film - and I have no preference among them. Hope is always a great kidder, and you don't have to act reverently around Dottie Lamour. Then there were always plenty of script gags - and some were not in the script. The Road shows were a romp from start to finish, with all of us chipping in new ideas and punch lines as we rolled along. We knew we weren't going to get any Oscars for Singapore or Utopia or Zanzibar so we didn't worry. We just whistled while we worked. Those pictures were as much fun to make as to see - maybe even more because lots of the gags never got on celluloid.

But Bing acknowledged that the *Road* films were of their time. In a 1973 interview he went on record as saying:

I couldn't possibly be encouraged to remake any of my old movies. Especially those Road To..... films. It'd be very difficult to believe that any of us could even pursue a girl, much less do anything with her if we caught her!

Just about all writers who look back on Hollywood's heyday heap praise on the *Road* series. David Shipman in his book "The Story of Cinema" speaks for most film historians when he writes:

The forties would not have been the same without them. Hope and Crosby take us into their idiot make-believe world, conning and cheating and chasing the girl and they do it with teamwork that is a highspot in film history; no other film comics ever approached their mutual understanding.

Up until the time the James Bond series came into being the *Road* films were the most successful series ever made. They had grossed well in excess of $50 million before *Dr. No* was released. The most financially successful was *Utopia* followed by *Rio* and *Morocco.* Those three earned rentals exceeding $4.5 million on their initial North American release. When Paramount sold the series to American television *Rio* and *Bali* were not part of the package because Hope and Crosby had two-thirds of the distributions right to them. Television sales of those two remaining Paramount films followed in the 1960s.

And a final piece of trivia: the menu in Paramount's commissary once included Turkey and Eggs a la Hope and Crosby.

ROAD TO BALI Film. It was filmed in the summer of 1952 for release the following year. Students of earlier Paramount product will be able to recognise footage lifted from *Reap the Wild Wind* (1942) [the squid sequence] *Beyond the Blue Horizon* (1942) [the tiger episode] and *Crosswinds* (1951) [the schooner footage]. But the most often seen frames were those of the erupting volcano first utilised in *Her Jungle Love* (1938). *Her Jungle Love* featured Dorothy Lamour. The stock shots of the volcano were subsequently incorporated into *Aloma of the South Seas* (1942) and *Rainbow Island* (1946). Lamour was in those two as well, which meant that in *Bali* her life was being threatened for the fourth time by the same volcano.

The film makes full use of guest appearances. Bing's brother Bob is there to fire a rifle because he was promised "a shot in the picture." The previous year Bob had used a lifelike model of Bing puffing a pipe in the film *Two Tickets to Broadway* in a sequence where Bob sang "Let's Make Comparisons". Humphrey Bogart is seen pulling the African Queen through a swamp in footage spliced in from that film. Jane Russell is seen emerging from a basket when Bob Hope plays snake charmer, a sequence deleted from the film's first showing on television in the U.K. on Christmas Day, 1965, because the BBC deemed it too risqué. Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis pop up in a dream sequence in return for Bing and Bob making cameo appearances in *Scared Stiff* (1953), the Martin and Lewis remake of *Ghost Breakers*, a Bob Hope comedy of 1940.

As usual Decca released songs from the film although Peggy Lee replaced Dorothy Lamour on disc as the female songstress. Although Lamour's limited success on record had been with Decca she was absent from the studio tie-in recordings because she was nursing a grudge against Hope and Crosby for their taking a percentage of the *Road* films profits starting with *Rio.* She thought she should have been in on the deal and in an attempt to recoup her losses she demanded a bigger fee from Decca than they were willing to pay. America's most influential film critic of the time was Bosley Crowther. His New York Times review of *Road to Bali* at the time of its release read: "Mr. Crosby, Mr. Hope and Miss Lamour may have looked lovelier but never better in their happy excursions down the 'Roads'. And now they're back the outrage of their collective absence is just beginning to sink

in." The filmgoing public sided with Crowther. The North American grosses exceeded $3 million with the film making Variety's top twenty money making films list for 1953. In the U.K. it was placed second at the box-office that year. Nobody can name Britain's number one ticket selling film of 1953. It was *A Queen is Crowned*, a documentary about the coronation of Queen Elizabeth the second.

ROAD TO BALI Song. Not a memorable number, it failed to rate a performance in the film by either Crosby and/or Hope. Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen composed it to be sung over the film's credits by an anonymous chorus who let audiences know what is in store. Bing and Bob did make a studio recording of the song for Decca but it fails to make an impact on the listener.

ROAD TO HONG KONG, THE Film. This seventh and final *Road* picture was made at Shepperton Studios, England. It was the only *Road* film made outside the U.S.A. It began life as a story called "The Bamboo Kid". Danny Kaye bought it as a possible film for himself to star in but then sold it to Bob Hope in 1959. Hope's stated intention was to reshape it for a *Road* picture. Joan Collins was the female lead with Dorothy Lamour playing herself in a nightclub sequence where she is seen singing "Personality", a song she had previously sung in *Utopia* (1946). I detected a slight taste of sour grapes when I read her rationale for making a brief appearance in *Hong Kong*. She said: "People expect me in it. More than anything I owe it to my public. They're really loyal to me." In fact, by 1961, when the film was shot, she was looking after her public by touring with a night club act. When she made a television appearance on a Bob Hope television special to promote *Hong Kong* she told the press: "My role in the television trailer is bigger than the one I've got in the picture." She never let the matter drop. When she was publicising her 1994 film *Decadence* she stated: "Oh Bob and Bing, yes. Love him, hated *him.* Bing was extremely reticent, almost to the point of monosyllabacy." It was eventually revealed that Bing was not in favour of her playing a major role in *Hong Kong* but the contractual deal with United Artists who released the film was that it should feature Hope, Crosby and Lamour.

Joan Collins didn't take to Bing any more than the latter-day Miss Lamour did. She called Hope the consummate comic. Her take on Bing was bitter. "He was off-hand, grumpy and vague. He appeared to me as an old man acting very young, or a young man who looked old. His face was like a crumpled tissue and I never felt his eyes when he looked at me. They looked through me. He did not endear himself to the crew and had the cute habit of spitting on the set, or wherever he happened to be." I don't really believe that. Joan Collins' two autobiographies indicate a selective lack of recall.

Filming took three months, from August to November, 1961, rather a long shooting time for a non-epic. It fell behind schedule because of the golfing activities of the two male leads. When Sheridan Morley asked his father about filming with Hope and Crosby, Robert Morley acknowledged that golf was more important than movie making to the Boys when he called them "two rather crotchety old men who couldn't wait to get back to the golf course in California." Morley was 53 at the time (Bing and Bob were 58). When the film was released in the U.S.A. reviews were cool. The New York Times critic wrote: "All in all, you felt they enjoyed getting together again, and you wish them well. The effect on screen is rather embarrassing, however." Archer Winston's piece in the New York Post said: "Give them an 'A' for effort, then suit yourself about attending." That said, the film made the box-office top ten in the U.K. That might have been down to the extra showmanship push provided by the managers of the Odeon circuit. In January, 2000 David Goodman, an ex-employee of the J. Arthur Rank controlled cinema chain recalled: "We were showing *The Road to Hong Kong* and we got a few theatres included to run on the road with a rickshaw from Streatham Common to Brighton. We had a runner from Southgate Harriers - they were well known - and of course we won but the rickshaw fell to pieces long before they got to Brighton and they carried it and eventually met up at the Regent, Brighton with a do in the evening." All in all *Road to Hong Kong* is not revered in the way the other half dozen Paramount *Roads* are, so perhaps it is all for the best that it was the last in the line.

ROAD TO HONG KONG, THE Song. Sammy Cahn and James Van Heusen had four songs in this final *Road* effort and Hope and Crosby sang the title song in an hotel room setting midway through proceedings. The issue made available on the soundtrack album is an edit of the recording made for the film rather than a studio re-recording.

ROAD TO MOROCCO Film. This was the third in the series, made in the summer of 1942. It was also the third and final time that Frank Butler and Don Hartman provided the screenplay for a *Road* picture and they were unsuccessfully nominated for an Academy Award for "Best Original Screenplay" for their work. The first indications that Dorothy Lamour had something to be disenchanted about can be seen from the payments the three leads received from Paramount for their services. Bing was rewarded with a salary of $175,000. Bob Hope received $100,000. Dottie was paid at a weekly rate of $5,000. Even if she was on set throughout the film's shooting schedule that would only net her around half of Hope's take. Most critics wrote favourable reviews of the film, but a somewhat sour note regarding Lamour was struck by William Whitebait in his write up for the 14th January, 1943 issue of the "New Statesman". He wrote: "Whenever Hope and Crosby get cracking funniness revives. Miss Lamour keeps drifting in. Oh, I know that many people can't live from one day to the next without dreams of Miss Lamour, but I can. She has for me the unsullied charm of putty." *Morocco* was the first of three *Road* films which had a title song, the others being *Bali* and *Hong Kong*. Bing made two recordings of the Johnny Burke - James Van Heusen composition for Decca, one a solo, the other a duet with Hope. Most *Road* film enthusiasts rate this one the best of the bunch. However, had it been left to Howard Barnes of the New York Herald-Tribune, *Morocco* would have been the final *Road* picture. His review ran:

> "Paramount has been teetering on the edge of vulgarity in several Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour *Road* pictures. It takes a nose dive with *Road to Morocco*. The fact remains that [it] represents the end of a dead street for this particular type of Hollywood nonsense."

Dilys Powell saw things differently when she submitted her

review to the Sunday Times in November of 1942. She thought:

"The two comedians, Crosby with his polished deliberateness, Hope with his wildfire speed, play beautifully together; a performance at once spontaneous and finished, a truly American performance."

Bob has Bing taken away in Morocco.

U.K. audiences agreed. The film set a record for attendances during its one week run at the Carlton cinema in Stockport's town centre. That cinema went through three name changes to Essoldo, Classic and Cannon but the war time record set by *Morocco* was never beaten. There was satisfaction in the States as well when the film's box-office performance grossed just over $4.5 million.

ROAD TO MOROCCO Song. One of the wittiest of the many film songs composed by Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen. It sets the tone of the film when it is sung by Hope and Crosby early on as the pair are riding a camel through the desert.

ROAD TO RIO Film. Number five in the series and the first one to find Hope and Crosby participating in its financing and profit. Bing stated before the film went into production at the beginning of 1947 that: "Bob has a little money in it, I have a commensurate amount and Paramount is in for a large chunk. He's going to be driving me, I'll be driving him and Paramount will be driving us both. All this drive must produce something at least cataclysmic. We shall see."

Later on, when filming was underway, it would seem that Bing had a handle on the economics of film making. He wrote:

> "There's been a lot of kidding about financial matters. Even the crew in the studio has kept up running gags along that line. But having my own dough in a film has made me more aware than ever before how many people actually are needed to make a picture and how expert each is in his specialised job. An almost inevitable reaction, as co-producer, is to wonder why so many people are on the payroll, but believe me, every person working on the set knows his job and is a trained expert. And that's a valuable lesson for an actor to learn."

Whether or not Hope and Crosby's golf suffered as a result of concentrating on filming is not known but Bing did have time to pull one memorable gag. In one scene Hope was on his knees clutching the hem of Crosby's coat and dramatically pleading, 'Don't leave me! Don't leave me!' When the first take of the scene was in the can Bing pulled his *Going My Way* Oscar statuette from under his coat and presented it to Bob to the amusement of a number of visitors to the set. The finished product headed Variety's list of top ten moneymaking films of 1948 with rentals of $4.5 million in North America. That year Bing was enjoying his fifth year at the top of the Motion Picture Herald's list of top ten box-office stars. Across the

Atlantic the Brits recognised the pulling power of *Road* pictures. *Rio* was booked to re-open the Royal Cinema in Wallasey shortly before Christmas, 1948. Then, in the mid 1950s, Eros Films secured the British distribution rights and re-released the film where it enjoyed a second lease of life when booked by several independent cinemas.

The boys try to fool the bad guys in Rio with a disguise.

ROAD TO SINGAPORE Film. This is the one that started the series, although at the time Paramount planned it as a one-off which could be made fairly cheaply because they owned a story called "Beach of Dreams". They hired Frank Butler and Don Hartman to write an adaptation, changed the title to *Road to Mandalay* and deemed it suitable to star studio contract players Jack Oakie and Fred MacMurray. Neither was available and so Bing, Dorothy Lamour and Burns and Allen were considered before that latter partnership was replaced by Bob Hope. And so the course of film comedy was altered as "off the wall" type humour caught on in every country in which *Road* films were shown. The inventors of the freewheeling, slightly surrealistic style introduced in *Road to Singapore* were Hope and Crosby working within the screenplay framework created by Butler and Hartman with uncredited assistance from gagman Barney Dean. Victor Schertzinger was given directorial credit although he also acknowledged the Crosby-Hope influence when he said: "I'm not worrying about directing you boys. All I have to do is start the camera. You'll take it from there." Filming of this first *Road* film began in the November of 1939 and less than six months later it was premiered at the New York Paramount, owned by the studio of course. At that time it was customary for a stage show to accompany the main film and it can only be fate that resulted in that up-and-coming Crosby admirer Frank Sinatra singing several times a day with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra as part of the theatre's added attraction.

Frank Nugent reviewed the film for the New York Times and he was the first critic to regard Dorothy Lamour as a dispensable *Road* film ingredient. He wrote: "The comedy is going along swimmingly until the boys meet sarong." Word of mouth made the film a hit, turning it into Paramount's top grossing film of 1940. In the days before television, videos and DVDs shortened the cinematic life of a movie films were revived for as long as they could turn a profit. In 1955, the Astoria Cinema in Finsbury Park wanted to celebrate its twenty-fifth birthday as a picture house. At the time it was acknowledged as the UK's most atmospheric cinema due to its elaborate internal decor. The management decided to show a classic film every day of that birthday week and selected *Road to Singapore* to conclude the festival on October 1st. Over the next half century the stature of that pioneering freewheeling first *Road* film has grown. It remains influential to this day.

ROAD TO UTOPIA Film. This fourth *Road* outing is not easy to place in Bing's film chronology. Filming began at Paramount in December, 1943. The film was edited ready for release in the spring of 1944 yet it did not receive its premiere until early 1946. Why the delay? Well, these were heady days for the Hollywood studios. Cinema audiences were at a peak. The war had ended. Television had not taken a hold. Going to the movies at least once a week was just about everybody's idea of escapism and the studios were working flat out to feed the appetites of a fairly uncritical public. This resulted in a backlog of product and the studios choose to drip feed their completed films in order to maximise revenue. But there may be another reason why *Utopia* was on the shelf for two years. Bing had registered as a successful straight actor with his Academy Award winning performance in *Going My Way*, which had been doing the rounds since the early summer of 1944. Perhaps Paramount did not want to detract from the "new" Bing too soon after that success.

A couple of incidents during the filming of *Utopia* indicate that all was not fun and games. Bing slipped whilst scaling a studio glacier. He was holding a rope which broke. He fell to the floor and the mattress that should have been in place to cushion his fall was not there. To make matters worse Bob Hope landed on top of him. That was the start of Bing's back trouble, a problem which dogged him for the rest of his life. The other cause of disharmony was Dorothy Lamour. She was becoming tired of waiting for Hope and Crosby to return from the golf course before that day's filming could commence. One day she was made up for filming until 4.30 in the afternoon. Gary Cooper was also filming on the Paramount lot that day and advised her to go home. She took that advice. Some time later the studio front office telephoned her to announce that Bing and Bob were ready for filming. They had forgotten to tell her that they were playing in a charity golf match that day. Ill feeling was unavoidable although the boys were more thoughtful for the rest of the

shooting schedule.

Paramount once more used its New York Paramount Theatre to showcase its latest money maker. With a seating capacity of 3,650 the studio seemed to be concerned about a *Road* picture filling that massive auditorium and on this occasion they booked the Benny Goodman Orchestra to supplement the film on its opening week. The result was a box-office record take of $135,000. It went on to earn $4.5 million on its North American release, resulting in a fourth place in the box-office successes of 1946. That year Bing was competing with himself for the moviegoer's spare change. In first place was *The Bells of St. Mary's* with *Blue Skies* placed third. *Road to Utopia* enjoyed an extended life at the U.K. box-office. In the early months of 1952 Rank booked it into its Odeon circuit cinemas for one day Sunday showings. That bridged a gap for *Road* film enthusiasts who had to wait for five years between *Rio* (1948) and *Bali* (1953). Norman Panama and Melvin Frank were nominated for an Academy Award for "Best Original Screenplay" for their work on *Road to Utopia* but the winners were Muriel and Sydney Box for *The Seventh Veil.*

ROAD TO ZANZIBAR Film. This 1941 movie came into being because Paramount writer Sy Bartlett felt the studio should build on the success of *Singapore* and make a follow-up comedy using the same trio of actors. Further continuity was provided by using the same director (Victor Schertzinger), writers (Frank Butler and Don Hartman), musical director (Victor Young) and dance director (LeRoy Prinz). Bartlett brought along the story of two men trekking through the jungles of Madagascar and earned himself a fee by fashioning the plot into a suitable vehicle for Crosby and Hope with the assistance of screenplay writer Don Hartman. That was no simple task because Bartlett's raw material was a serious epic called 'Find Colonel Fawcett'.What happened to turn Bartlett's idea into a ninety-two minute comedy that achieved better business at the box-office than its predecessor is told by Melville Shavelson, who worked on the screenplay of *Riding High.*

> "Frank Butler and Don Hartman went to see Buddy De Sylva, the ex-songwriter who was then head of Paramount studios, and told him the story of *Road to Zanzibar*...Hartman was having a lot of trouble telling it and hiding the fact that there was no third act and the second act didn't go anyplace. But right near the beginning, De Sylva started laughing, and roared all the way through it, and when Don finished telling the story, De Sylva gave them a fat deal to write the screenplay immediately."

Bing was involved in singing three of the songs Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen wrote for *Zanzibar* and to me they are the weakest compositions those writers ever concocted for a Crosby picture: "It's Always You", "You Lucky People You" and "African Etude". In fact, Bing didn't ever bother making a studio recording of that last number.

Obviously audiences and critics judged the film on its comedy elements and it earned some good reviews. Otis Ferguson wrote this one for the New Republic: "The funniest thing I have seen on the screen in years. It still has the free and happy air of the spontaneous." Howard Barnes of the New York Herald-Tribune endorsed Ferguson's view when he stated: "*Road to Zanzibar* is mostly nonsense, but it is nonsense of the most delightful sort." The National Board of Review named it one of the ten best American films of 1941, with Bing's *Birth of the Blues* also making that same list. As expected it was on Variety's list of top ten money making films of 1940/41. Its box-office drawing power was noted on this side of the Atlantic. The Carlton Cinema in Cosham had been the direct hit of a German bomb on 5th December, 1940. The cinema re-opened with *Road to Zanzibar* on Christmas Eve, 1941.

The three principals in Zanzibar

Keith Parkinson

(Editor: Thanks, Keith and what could be more appropriate than to follow on with details of what was intended to be the eighth *Road* film.

Recently, Greg Van Beek was able to acquire a copy of the screen outline written by Mel Shavelson for the *Road* picture that was in the planning stages at the time of Bing's passing, *The Road To The Fountain of Youth.* It was, in fact, scheduled to go into production in the spring of 1978 and would have been the first new *Road* in 16 years. Greg writes:

"Bing referenced this "synopsis" (as he called it) during numerous interviews throughout his final year. In one instance, during a mid-September interview filmed during rehearsals for his 1977 British tour, Bing indicated that the script "hadn't been fleshed out with enough scenes to tell whether we want to do it or not....what it needs is a lot of lunacy, like Monty Python and Mel Brooks have been using so successfully."

Without question, the plot outlined is something of a departure from the clean, wholesome, family entertainment provided by the previous installments in the series. Perhaps this is one road that was best left untraveled. I'll let the reader judge for themselves. Incidentally, the copy of the screen outline reproduced

below comes from Bob Hope's own private archives. No doubt Bing was in possession of an identical copy."

The Road To The Fountain of Youth

Screen Outline by Melville Shavelson, January 31, 1977

> "We're off on the Road to Morocco
> This camel is tough on the spine
> (Hit me with a Band Aid, Dad)
> Where we're goin', how we're goin', how can we be sure?
> I'll lay you eight to five that we'll meet
> Dorothy Lamour."

America and Bob and Bing were young when that song was born along with the rest of the *Road* pictures. It was a happier time for all of us, one we'd all like to get back to. Well, who says you can't live twice?

All you have to do is find the Fountain of Youth.

Casablanca. The native Bazaar. Shoving, shouting, importuning Arab merchants, selling everything from hashish to television sets. For it is 1977, and in the background are the high-rise office buildings of today's newly-prosperous Morocco. On the screen of a decrepit old 15 inch RCA TV, Moroccan television is finally getting around to the old Road pictures. There on the flickering screen are Bing Crosby and Bob Hope atop a careening camel, young and vibrant and at the top of their form, except for the camel, who had seen better days, but not recently.

> "Off on the Road To Morocco
> Hooray! Blow the horn! Everybody duck!
> We may run into villains
> But we're not afraid to roam
> Because we read the story
> And we wind up safe at home!
> Certainly do get around
> Like Webster's Dictionary
> We're Morocco bound!"

The song keeps echoing and reechoing out of the carefree past, most of its message lost on the group of Moroccans clustered about the old television sets on the battered counter of a filthy stall in the old marketplace. Some of the Moroccans are in modern dress; the new and rich generation. Others, older, still affect the Fez and burnoose. Among the group, we spot an American tourist, not too well dressed, although his faded checked jacket gives a hint of past glory. It is an old and tired Bing Crosby, more saddened than pleased by this view of himself as he used to be during the Happy Times. He is holding by the hand a grimy child named Harold, his one and only grandson. Harold doesn't want to watch any more of the picture, and Bing has a terrible time keeping him quiet. The Moroccans stare curiously as the battle rages; Harold is not above kicking his grandfather in the shins, and good old Gramps is not above giving him a surreptitious toe in the slats when no one is looking. The contest is brought to a temporary halt when Bing notices that the picture on the old TV set is jumping up and down and growing difficult to distinguish; he calls out to the old Arab tending the stall to check the problem. When the Arab turns, Bing is startled to see the face of and old and tired Bob Hope beneath the Fez, wearing a dirty and torn burnoose. It takes a moment for them to recognize each other, and then there is a warm reunion, although Bob hasn't completely forgiven Bing for the Road to Hong Kong, the Road To Bali, the Road to Rio, the Road to Utopia, the Road to Morocco, the Road to Zanzibar, and the Road to Singapore, in all of which Bing left his bosom chum holding the dirty end of the stick, after attempting to have him murdered, sold into slavery, and eaten by cannibals. Put it all down to high spirits, Bing tells him, and Bob is so happy to see a familiar face he forgives him. After all, he's been working here in the Bazaar since Road to Hong Kong in 1962 and even Barbra Streisand would look good to him now.

He manages to get the TV picture straightened out and they stare at themselves on the television screen. They both agree they look younger today than they did in 1942. Of course, Dorothy Lamour must now be a grandmother, they both remark, sadly. But she was great while she had it. Luckily, both of them still have it.

"How do you keep so young?" Bob inquires of Bing, while on the screen his real thoughts flash in subtitle over his forehead: "How did you get to be such an alta cocker?"

Bing tells him he owes his youthful looks to clean living, clean thinking, and the fact that he has married a young wife and now has this adorable little child. He indicates Harold, who promptly bites his finger and informs the world that he is Bing's first grandson. Bing's married daughter brought Bing along on the trip to be the baby-sitter, he hasn't worked in 15 years and he doesn't have a nickel, and if he doesn't stop looking at that stupid picture on TV, Harold will not buy him lunch, and will swipe his Social Security check.

Bing promptly kicks Harold in the slats and the battle is on again, during which Bob manages to inform his former partner that Bob is now shacked up with a beautiful young Arab belly dancer and was merely watching the store for her father. At this point, a toothless old Arab crone comes out of the back room and cackles that it is time for Bob to come to bed with her and earn his keep.

"Coming, Mother," says Robert, his cover blown, and waves a feeble farewell.

Later that evening, the two former partners meet in an evil-looking Arab coffee house in the old quarter, by prearrangement. With all pretense now swept away, they reminisce sadly about the good old days. Bing remarks that he still plays golf, although these days he needs a caddy to straighten him up after putts, and Bob says he has a little Arab boy who performs the same function for him when he finishes with the old Arab crone. If only, they both remark, it could be the same as it was the last time they were both in Morocco. They are interrupted by the entrance into the coffee house of an entourage, the Sultan of the oil-rich Emirate of Dumyat on the Persian Gulf, his harem of twenty beautiful, dark eyed houris, and their eunuch bodyguards. Although it is almost unheard of for a harem to be seen in public, the Sultan has so much oil he can afford to take them wherever he goes and keep them well guarded. He is a hearty, vigorous man, and Bob and Bing can't help but eye him with envy. If only they were ten years younger. Bob takes a second look at the houris, and decides thirty years would be better. All right. Thirty-five.

At this point they are startled when one of the beautiful, veiled girls breaks away from the group and manages to slip over to their table.

"Bob!" she cries. "Bing! Don't you recognize me?"

She lowers her veil. She is about nineteen, beautiful, clear-skinned, and vaguely familiar. But only vaguely.

"I'm Dorothy Lamour!" she insists. They consider calling for the butterfly nets, but she tells them of incidents in their careers only she would know. And she has an incredible story. She met the Sultan about fourteen years ago, when he fell for her, but he only liked very young girls. So he revealed his secret. While drilling for oil on one of his private islands, he was taken to a spot by a local witch doctor where there was a small spring with miraculous powers. Bringing in his oil drilling rigs, he got to the source of the little spring and found he had struck a veritable fountain of youth. The Sultan, she informs them, is actually 92, but after a visit to the fountain, he is able to work his way through the entire harem in one strenuous evening. He allowed Dorothy to partake of the miraculous waters, and her present youth is the result. However, the effect does wear off, and even now the Sultan is feeling a little dizzy at night after getting only halfway through his harem; occasionally he has to call a time out. Therefore, they are about to embark on his private yacht for another visit to the mysterious island.

Bing and Bob are bug-eyed with hope as she concludes her story. How can they get to go along? Dorothy says there is no way, the Sultan is a very jealous man, and she points to two of the eunuchs. One of them is the father of seven children, the other the father of ten; when they made a pass at a couple of the girls in the harem a few years ago, the Sultan had them castrated. He keeps them around to run the projector when they show dirty movies in the seraglio. He can trust them to keep their eyes on the sprocket holes.

The two old partners shudder; whatever age has done to them, it hasn't gotten that far, yet. And more than anything in the world, they would like to go back to being the men they were in 1942. Dorothy tells them there is one chance; she thinks she can bribe the eunuchs for five thousand dollars each and get them aboard ship. Bing tells her, sadly, that he would have to save his Social Security checks for so long he would have to make the journey horizontally. But Bob's eyes brighten. It seems the old crone he is living with has five thousand dollars stuffed into her mattress. The only reason Bob can still go to bed with her is that feeling her mattress gets him excited. Of course, with only $5,000, this will deal his old pal Bing out of it, but Bob assures Bing he will write a book about his adventures, and Bing will get an autographed copy.

That night, Bing tries to break into the room behind the old television sets and find the mattress, but Bob has locked the door because the old crone is visiting her grandmother, and Bob has a suspicious nature after the meeting with Bing at the coffee house. Bing finds an old burnoose, blacks out his teeth, and makes a presentable double for the old crone, pretending to have returned ahead of schedule because of her deep passion for Bob, ordering him to bed with her again. Reluctantly, Bob unlocks the door, and Bing has to carry on the pretense in order to get to the mattress. Bob is right; touching the mattress gets him very excited, and Bing has to fight for his honor with all his strength before the old crone herself suddenly appears, with a large double-barreled shotgun. In the ensuing melee, the two manage to escape with the mattress, but it has been shot full of holes and by the time they get it to safety, there is just $14 left inside it, the rest of the money scattered throughout the bazaar.

In despair, the two swear eternal fealty to each other.

Obviously, at their age, neither one is going to be able to make it to the island alone. They manage to find the Sultan and his harem, who have taken over a whole floor at the Casablanca Hilton, and somehow make contact with Dorothy Lamour. She promises to get them aboard the yacht, although without paying bribes it will be terribly dangerous.

Bob and Bing, disguised as the two oldest belly dancers in Morocco, get aboard the yacht ostensibly to entertain the Sultan, but after one bump his sharp 92-year-old eyes identify them as males and he orders them castrated. Bing tries to get Bob to stay behind and stall the pursuit. "After all," he says, "a little castration isn't going to make any difference to you at your age." But Bob is unable to risk it, and somehow Dorothy manages to stow them away in hiding.

The yacht casts off for the Unknown Island.

Walking on the deck the next morning, the effect of the sea air suddenly ages the Sultan to his full 92 years. He walks in to look at his harem and finds he doesn't even enjoy window shopping any more. He takes to his cabin, to await the marvelous powers of the Fountain.

One of the girls in the harem discovers Bob and Bing in hiding. Without the Sultan to keep them busy, the entire harem is starving. They tell Dorothy they will not reveal her friends if Bob and Bing will satisfy all of them that night. Dorothy tries to tell them that the two men are not as young as they used to be, but both Bob and Bing shout her down, eager for the test.

Sadly, Dorothy tells them their eyes are bigger than their stomachs.

Eagerly, the two prepare for an evening they will remember for the rest of their lives. A few simple exercises, a hearty meal of oysters, four bottles of vitamins, and they are ready. One of the veiled houris takes them to the luxurious harem quarters, where the full twenty beautiful maidens await them on satin pillows.

Just then, the ship hits a storm; the boat starts to pitch and toss; and as Bob and Bing reach for the voluptuous maidens surrounding them, all the girls suddenly become 62 years old, including Dorothy, who becomes Dorothy Lamour of today.

What has happened is obvious; all of them have been in the harem for thirty years, and the effects of the Fountain of Youth have worn off simultaneously, during the storm.

If truth be told, Bing and Bob are somewhat relieved.

By the next morning, the mysterious, cloud-covered island is coming into view on the horizon. The old Sultan, it turns out, has expired during the night, clutching the centerfold of *Playboy Magazine* to his breast. He is buried at sea in a colorful ceremony participated in by the entire 62-year-old harem; and when the Sultan's coffin is slid into the ocean over the side of the ship, it remains vertical in the water for a full 30 seconds as the girls applaud.

Then it disappears, with a loud sigh.

The end of an era.

As the ship plows through the clouds surrounding the island and the beach comes into view, a strange series of rounded, straw-like substances is seen near the water line. Each of them is about four feet in length. Bob and Bing turn to Dorothy for an explanation, and she whispers to them that there is something strange about the island. The natives always seem afraid that a giant gorilla will appear, and have built huge walls around their village to keep him out.

"Nonsense," Bing says, "that's just in the movies."

"Then how do you explain those tremendous, four-foot things on the beach?" Dorothy wants to know.

"What are they?"

"Peanut shells."

They finally go ashore and meet the natives, who are a strange breed. While they are black, they all speak Italian. It seems Dino Di Laurentiis has been here.

The native Chief and the Witch Doctor inform all of them that they cannot guide them to the fountain until they have made a sacrifice to the gorilla. They must tie a virgin to a stake. All of the girls look at each other and decide it is obvious they do not qualify. And the Chief assures them that, as the climate here is very warm and the coconut wine extremely relaxing, there isn't a virgin left in the native population, according to the latest Gallup Poll.

Things are at an impasse until Bing gets the Chief aside and tells him that Bob has had such a terrible sex life, he can be considered a virgin for all practical purposes. At least, a gorilla would never know the difference. The Witch Doctor checks his instructions and finds no mention that the virgin cannot be male; the gorilla never thought it would come up. The Chief decides that Bob is a better choice than losing one of the girls from the tribe, and orders him prepared for the sacrifice. The girls of the tribe make the preparations, stripping him almost naked, and Bob is very pleased by the whole operation, not having been informed of it's ultimate conclusion. He thinks they are a little kinky when they chain him to a stake, but he decides it might be interesting. And then the others retreat inside the village, and Bob sees King Kong advancing on him.

Kong gets to him and picks him up in his huge hand, inspecting him carefully. Then Kong plants a huge kiss on top of Bob's head; it seems that Kong is gay, and has fallen for Bob in a big way.

By this time, Bing has had a change of heart, and decides he and the natives must save his pal. Somehow they create a diversion, and Bob escapes into the jungle. Desperate, hungry, and thirsty, he stumbles upon a huge fountain in a jungle grove, the water spouting high into the air and forming a lake. Obviously, this must be the Fountain of Youth. Without waiting to check, he dives happily into it.

He has made a mistake. When he climbs out of the water, he has turned into a huge gorilla, who still looks like Bob Hope; a natural resemblance. Now he has a real problem, because Kong discovers him and is still on the make. And it is now possible. Bob plays with the huge gorilla, coquettishly, hand on hip, so as not to arouse his anger; but things get pretty serious when Kong grabs him and kisses him again, and Bob manages to slap his face and make good his escape.

Crashing through the jungle, mangling trees in his path, Bob-Kong comes upon Bing and the group that is trying to find him. He holds Bing in his hand and debates whether to crush him in his hand or step on him for what he has done. Bing talks him out of it, as he always does, and promises the Witch Doctor will get Bob back to normal size.

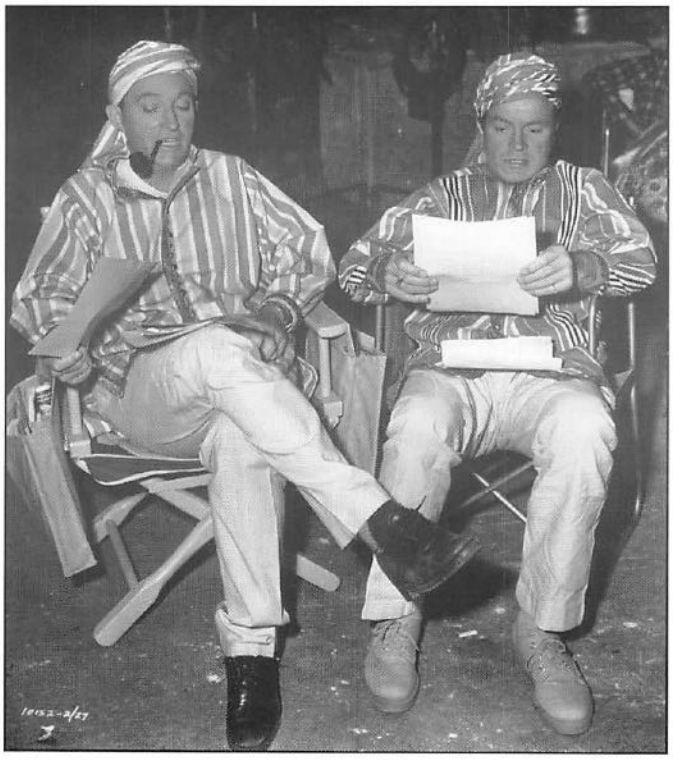
The Witch Doctor tries his best, but he is not very good at his work, having graduated last in his class. He casts a fancy spell, but the result is that Bob is reduced in size to that of a very small monkey. Bing takes him back to the village, where he locates a barrel organ and decides to put Bob to work earning dimes for him, but as all the natives seem to be Italian, there isn't much interest in another organ grinder and monkey. The streets are full of them, and Bob doesn't collect a single dime.

By this time, the Witch Doctor has put out a call to the local AMA on the drums, and gets back the choreography for a medicine dance that will restore Bob to normal. The entire village joins in, Bing sings the witching song provided by a native who looks like Sammy Cahn, and Bob becomes himself again, which is really not much of an improvement.

Now, Dorothy Lamour manages to locate them again. She thinks she remembers the way to the Fountain of Youth, and together with Bing and Bob, they slip away during the night, happy to escape the ineffective Witch Doctor and his Chief.

By moonlight, they discover the Fountain and it's pool of miraculous waters, and dip their hands into it, drinking their fill. They dive into it, happily, then emerge, join hands, and start running through the jungle; we realize we are watching a scene from Road to Bali. Bob and Bing and Dorothy are young again, young and happy, but as they turn and the camera moves in closer, we realize the transition hasn't been completely successful. What did you expect, miracles? Look what the Fountain of Youth had to start with. It did it's best, but Bing and Bob are still a little older than they were in 1952, but it's better than nothing.

We hear the Director yelling, "CUT!" and we realize we are on the set at Paramount, where the picture is being made. The Director walks in front of the camera to get a good look at them and asks them where the hell they were last night? They look terrible, compared to yesterday's dailies. The cameraman says he'll have to photograph them through six layers of cheese cloth. So what else is new?



Bob and Bing realize they are back at the height of their careers. 1952. They have an opportunity no one else has ever had – a chance to live their lives over again and avoid all the mistakes. It is the Golden Age of Hollywood, Humphrey Bogart and Errol Flynn and Clark Gable are still around, but Bob and Bing discover the fun is in doing it the first time around, even if you do it wrong.

Nothing goes right in their attempts to improve their careers, their love lives, and their bank accounts. When they try to correct their old mistakes, they make new ones that are worse. Even with the ability to know the future, Bing finds he loses on the ponies, because he can't resist the touts. Bob finds the chick he bombed out with in 1952 still prefers Cecil B. De Mille, who is very much around. Everything they say and do is influenced by their knowledge of the future, and their friends start to avoid them. Y. Frank Freeman calls them into the Paramount front office and urges them to see a psychiatrist before the studio has them committed. They do, and the psychiatrist orders them committed.

They manage to escape the men in the white coats and locate Dorothy Lamour. They now admit they've had enough of the second time around. She tells them she long ago came to the same conclusion. She didn't really enjoy her last 28 years in the harem. And she has with her the antidote given her by the Witch Doctor in case things went wrong.

Now they have their choice. Will they take the magic potion and return to their true age, or not?

They take it.

Suddenly, they are back in the Bazaar in Casablanca, watching themselves on the old television set. And as they put an arm about each other, Bob and Bing sing, "I'm Glad I'm Not Young Any More."

As they finish, the old crone sticks her head out of the back room and motions Bob inside. Bob quickly turns to Bing.

"Let's find that goddam island again!" he says, and they are off.

FADE OUT

THE END

(Editor: Umm... Yes, I think the outline needed a lot of work on it to make it a viable project. But what do members think?

In February, the Philadelphia Daily News carried an article by David Bleiler about the forthcoming Academy Awards ceremony which then went on to consider the greatest movie stars of all time. Here's an extract.)

Greatest movies and stars?

. . . "Brokeback Mountain" is a groundbreaking drama that looks to be headed for Oscar gold. But how does it compare to other landmarks of socially conscious cinema? Because ticket prices today average about $6.40, and were averaging about 40 cents when Gregory Peck exposed anti-Semitism in "Gentleman's Agreement," or less than $1.50 when Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight had "everybody talkin' " about them in "Midnight Cowboy," it's not fair to use box-office gross to compare a modern film's popularity to any films made in the years before Tom Hanks became a household name.

Thus the creation of the **ETS (Estimated Ticket Sales)**, which can compare a film's or actor's popularity from any decade to those of today. A few years back, a local Philadelphia entertainment reporter called Arnold Schwarzenegger the most popular movie star of all time. Not quite.

The ETS methodology uses a rather simple mathematical equation of dividing gross revenue by average ticket price. Of course, there are varying factors such as if a film is more popular in cities, where ticket prices are higher; if it's a children's film, hence lower prices; how much a film made in its first and second runs (a practice that may have started with "Birth of a Nation" in 1915 and was abandoned in 1975 with "Jaws," a film that simultaneously revolutionized the way movies open and introduced the modern blockbuster); and how many times a film was reissued in theaters ("Gone with the Wind," for instance, had eight wide re-releases after its record-breaking 1939 debut).

Survey the list of the most popular stars, and there is only one contemporary in the Top 25 - Harrison Ford. In the Top 50, only Paul Newman, Eddie Murphy, Tom Hanks and Clint Eastwood are still making films. What about the ladies who are still active? Julie Andrews is in the Top 75, while Shirley MacLaine just makes the Top 100. (Julia Roberts just misses that list, coming in at 101.)

The prevalence of the legendary stars of the 1930s and '40s dominating the list can be attributed to the fact that during the heyday of the studio system, most actors would be required to make two or three films a year. Add to this that between 60 and 100 million people a week were going to the movies (compared to between 25 million and 30 million over the last five years), and it makes any star of today making a presence on the list all the more impressive.

Surprises are plentiful. Clark Gable and John Wayne battling it out for No. 1 probably won't raise any eyebrows. **But how many would have guessed that Bing Crosby sold more tickets than James Stewart, Cary Grant or Humphrey Bogart?**

. . . As for Arnold Schwarzenegger, he's sold about 339 million tickets. Clark Gable, John Wayne, Bing Crosby, Gary Cooper and Cary Grant all sold more than a billion.

David Bleiler

The ETS Top 25 Movie Stars of All-Time

(Supporting roles tabulate at 50 percent; includes all films released through 2005)

Star Estimated Ticket Sales (in millions)

1. Clark Gable 1,288.3 The "King" of Hollywood; "GWTW" pushes him past The Duke; the biggest star of the 1930s.
2. John Wayne 1,245.7 A box-office superstar for five decades; the definition of American masculinity to generations of filmgoers.
3. **Bing Crosby** 1,134.2 The "Road" movies and Father O'Malley made him the biggest star of the 1940s.
4. Gary Cooper 1,116.5 Women loved him, men wanted to be like him; a superstar from 1930s through 1950s; won two Oscars.
5. James Stewart 1,115.9 The personification of American idealism in the 1930s; made a "comeback" in Westerns and Hitchcock films to become the biggest star of the 1950s.
6. Cary Grant 1,062.5 The epitome of style and sophistication; comedy, drama, action, he did it all.
7. Spencer Tracy 953.8 Arguably the greatest American movie actor of the 20th century.
8. Mickey Rooney 913.7 Judge Hardy's son; Judy Garland's dancing partner; and a movie actor during NINE decades.
9. Harrison Ford 869.6 Han Solo, Indiana Jones; an authentic modern superstar; Jack Warner would have loved him.
10. Gregory Peck 838.5 A gentleman adored by public and peers; as Atticus Finch he gave one of the all-time great performances.

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Jon Oye, Illinois, USA

Thanks for yet another engrossing issue of *BING*. We are indebted to you and the ICC team for maintaining such a high level of quality through the years.

I read Ken Crossland's perceptive and provocative essay, "Whatever Happened to C. K. Dexter-Haven" with particular interest. Ken makes many valid points, and though I respect his opinion as much as anyone's, I nevertheless felt compelled to accept your invitation and respond with, not necessarily a rebuttal, but . . . let's call it a defense of Bing's 1960s persona and career choices, in light of extenuating circumstances.

In an era dominated by the emerging Baby Boom generation, whose credo was "Don't trust anyone over 30," any entertainer within hailing distance of Bing's age was automatically at a disadvantage. We're not talking about the early '60s of JFK, the Dick Van Dyke Show, John Glenn, and "Moon River." The period from about 1964-69, which is generally what people mean when they refer to "The Sixties" (as fate would have it, the years *The Hollywood Palace* aired), was an anomaly in the context of the 20th century. So let's give Bing a break.

The level of social and musical upheaval that virtually became the norm for more than half a decade had not been seen before, and hasn't since. Established singers and musicians who had previously thrived suddenly found themselves struggling to survive in hostile territory. Bing, still beloved by the generations that had weathered the Great Depression and the Second World War, had always been known as a hip guy, but he wasn't perceived as such by most Boomers, who saw him as more of an *un*-hip grandfather. Bob Dylan, by consensus the 1960s' "voice of his generation", admitted in a 2001 interview, "It never occurred to me that Bing Crosby was on the cutting edge 20 years before I was listening to him. I never heard that Bing Crosby."

So what was an aging crooner (read: a member of The Establishment) to do in the era of psychedelia, Carnaby Street, Sgt. Pepper, and Woodstock? Try to go with the flow and somehow fit in? Bing did try a few times, but was more often than not unsuccessful. In fact, one such effort, "Hey Jude", has been held up as an object of ridicule ever since. Let's just be thankful he never recorded an album with sitar backing.

Would we have had Bing mount some sort of musical counter-revolution in the Age of Aquarius? He knew he had nothing more to prove, having already conquered all worlds, and *The Hollywood Palace* seems to me to have been a good fit at that point in his career. No, he wasn't quite C. K. Dexter-Haven of a decade past, but it wasn't for lack of confidence. His witty, masterful, show-stopping 1966 medley with Johnny Mercer, and a couple of memorable performances with Louis Armstrong were proof of that, and those moments alone were enough to make his stint at the *Palace* worth it. The show also provided Bing with the opportunity to remain in touch with the times without necessarily acquiescing to them.

As Ken points out, he had a young family now, and wanted to be a part of that—something he was unable to do with his first, thanks to the demands of being the most popular entertainer in the world. Articulate and erudite, emceeing was one more thing that Bing did well; he now could fill that role periodically on the *Palace*, between *American Sportsman* gigs, the occasional recording session, and the more-than-occasional visit to the links, while spending more time with his wife and children. It was the best of all worlds for a retirement-age entertainer who loved golf, hunting, fishing, and family. Can we really fault him for that?

Conversely, what if Bing had opted to sit out the decade entirely, content to watch the parade go by while he raised his brood? Would the general public of today be looking more favorably on his career as a whole? Possibly. But, on the other hand, in the absence of any presence whatsoever in the 1960s, he might be completely forgotten today. And who knows? He might have enjoyed his retirement enough not to return to the stage and the studio in the '70s, depriving us of a wonderful coda to an unmatched career.

And what about today's subscribers to the current career model for senior superstars, whom Ken cites, that are still in touch with their fan bases? Well, would we really have wanted to see Bing doing then what Mick Jagger, who's 62, does now: acting as though he's still the twenty-something rebel he hasn't been in decades?

I applaud Bing for aging gracefully and recognizing his limitations in The Sixties—limitations that weren't only inflicted by age, but also by the social climate, as well as changing tastes in music, which were influenced by an expanding younger record buying public that by and large fenced out the "older generation". Granted, the sitcom might have been better left on the drawing board, and we really didn't need *Thoroughly Modern Bing*, but I think that, all things considered, including health issues, he comported himself admirably in a time of unprecedented turbulence.

As I said, Bing knew he had nothing more to prove;

thankfully, during the tumultuous Sixties he also had the presence of mind *and* the self-confidence not to succumb to the times . . . or to ignore them.

Miss Pat Forster, Midhurst, West Sussex, UK

I so enjoyed the latest BING (#141) – thank you for your kind remarks. It was full of absorbing information. I especially liked the "C. K. Dexter Haven" analogy. I met this analogy in 1976 when I walked round Sunningdale Golf Course with Bing and Kathryn. Although elderly by then he was very much in evidence!

I remember reading a book or article on Bing and Sinatra together in *High Society* and *Robin and the 7 Hoods*. It pointed out that Bing completely "took over" from Sinatra and dwarfed him without Sinatra seemingly aware of it!

I was chatting with John Bignell on the phone just a few days before the magazine arrived. We agreed that the standard of the Club had reached a wonderful level, thanks to all you people responsible, and I think you excelled yourself in this last one.

Stan Willcox, Leicester, UK

Congratulations to all concerned with the production of BING #141. A bonanza of interesting articles – the reports on the Lincoln Centre film shows and Carolyn Schneider's talk at Leeds were outstanding.

Ref the Ken Crossland article "Whatever happened to C. K. Dexter Haven," Bing was not on the same wavelength as the "newer boys and girls." Sorry to say they were "Small Fry" compared with Bob Hope, Jimmy Durante and Johnny Mercer with whom Bing was very much at home.

Graham Pascoe, Bathurst, NSW, Australia

After I read BING number 140, I made a few notes and now I'm doing something about it. They concern Keith Parkinson's 'Celluloid Crosby' on *East Side of Heaven.* It was interesting to read about some aspects in USA and UK. Here's some information about *East Side of Heaven* in the antipodes.

East Side of Heaven was first shown in Australia at Sydney's State Theatre, which seated 2,678 patrons, on 11 August 1939. The noted Australian soprano Marjorie Lawrence sang on stage during its run of two weeks. It then went to the Victory and Lyric theatres simultaneously for one week in late September. Towards the end of October a third run of one week commenced at the Tatler Theatre and then it was shown at the Variety Theatre for another week. It wasn't finished. In June 1942 Sydney's Empire Theatre revived *East Side of Heaven* for one week and in October 1943 it was back at the Lyric for a week.

The advertising of the film featured 'Sandy. The amazing baby'.

Melbourne folk could watch *East Side of Heaven* at the Majestic Theatre (capacity 1,537) from 20 October for two weeks. It then ran for one week at the Liberty Theatre and the Victory Theatre in the near-city seaside suburb of St Kilda showed it during the first week of 1940.

The critic for *The Sydney Morning Herald* thought the film offered 'many laughs.' That was 'despite Bing's crooning' although Bing's acting did impress the writer. *The Herald* in Melbourne told readers that the film was 'amusing' but did not comment on Bing's performance.

I see that *East Side of Heaven* was first shown on UK television in 1979. Australian viewers did not have to wait that long. It was shown on the small screen in Sydney in March 1965 and repeated in 1967, 1969 and 1972.

FREE NEXT WEEK BING CROSBY
CD2 BING CROSBY
1. TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS
2. DECK THE HALLS
3. THE FIRST NOEL
4. AWAY IN A MANGER
5. SILENT NIGHT
6. GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN
7. O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
8. O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL
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DON'T MISS CD2 NEXT SUNDAY
FREE BING CROSBY CHRISTMAS CD NEXT SUNDAY
Complete your classic Christmas collection next Sunday with your free Bing Crosby CD. Only with The Sun-Herald next Sunday.
FRANK SINATRA & BING CROSBY
wake up to
The Sun-Herald

Rod Poynter, New South Wales, Australia (by e-mail)

. . . In other news, the Sun-Herald, a Sunday newspaper, came with a free 'Frank & Bing' CD offer last weekend. Actually, the Frank CD was last Sunday, and the Bing comes this week. They are also running an SMS poll on who was the better singer. Apart from taking up half of the front page, there were a number of huge ads dotted throughout the paper for this week's CD. Maybe the revival is underway. Now, if we could only convince people that Bing sang *more* than Christmas

songs...All in all, it felt more like a 1975 than a 2005 edition. I have included one of the ads as an attachment, for your interest.

Also, I gave a talk at a media training college recently, which could lead to further work as a trainer or lecturer and in June, I delivered a presentation entitled 'Rediscovering Bing Crosby' to the NSW Phonograph Society in Sydney - which included audio and video grabs. It ran around 70 minutes, and was very well received.

Kurt Schroeder, Lovettsville, Virginia USA

I'm attaching a comic strip from Dec. 24, 2005, that prominently references Bing. In it, Bing's voice resurrects the Christmas spirit for one of the main characters here. (As background, the older woman in the strip had decided to reject all of the usual hustle and bustle of holiday preparations, essentially foregoing much of what constitutes the modern celebration of Christmas.) I thought you might want to use the strip in the magazine (even though it's a bit dated with the holidays now past), but even if not, you may find it amusing.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks for the outstanding job that you, Wig, and other prominent Crosby fans have done in writing and publishing BING Magazine, and in running the ICC. I look forward to every issue of the magazine, which is unfailingly fascinating from cover to cover (including the covers!), and I very much enjoy being a member of a club full of such knowledgeable fans, who regularly share, through the magazine, their interesting perspectives on Bing's life and work. Please keep up your great work!

J. Roger Osterholm, Ormond Beach, Florida, USA

Recently I had the pleasure of watching the film *Going Hollywood*, released late in 1933, and noted a few interesting points. The picture was filmed from late August to October 1933, and by the time of its release Crosby had returned to CBS radio as a major singing star.

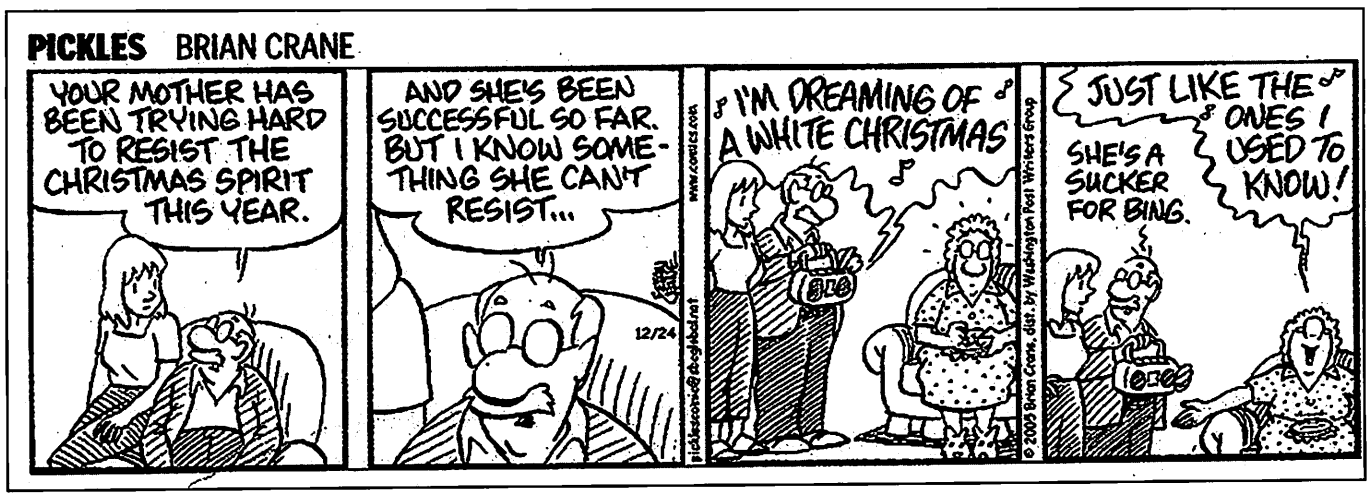
1. When Crosby's character is awakened early in the film he notes that the year is 1934.
2. The Radio Rogues, a group of comics, performed four songs, one as Kate Smith singing "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain," another as "Rusty" Columbo singing "You Call It Madness," Morton Downey singing "Remember Me," and J.D. Rockefeller singing "My Dime Is Your Dime." Rockefeller became famous for giving away dimes in the 1920s and 1930s, especially at the Oceanside Golf Course, Ormond Beach, Fla. One of my friends, Billy MacDonald, got one of these dimes in the '30s. Russ Columbo, who died in 1934, the year after the film, was a serious rival to Crosby at the time, but evidently Bing did not take the competition to heart.
3. A production number in the film showed a group of dancers dressed as scarecrows, like that played by Ray Bolger in "The Wizard of Oz" (1939). The lead dancer seemed to prefigure the dance of Bolger in the later film, and it could have been the great dancer without billing.

Turner Classic Movies showed Crosby's great 1944 classic *Going My Way* and in the great scene in which Bing and Rise Stevens sing "Ave Maria" along with a boys' choir, three pictures of B-17 Flying Fortresses are posted on the back wall. You might recall that at that time Bing's company was making major structures for many of the famous bombers' wings, those made by Douglas Aircraft under contact. These units at the time were called Bing's Wings.

Charles Hall, Acocks Green, Birmingham, UK

May I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for all the hard work you and the other officers do on our behalf. I do so look forward to the interesting and informative journal.

I have the Bing musical autobiography in its original form on LPs but to be informed of its appearance on CD was great. Needless to say I am now enjoying it in its present very convenient form. Many thanks.


PICKLES BRIAN CRANE
YOUR MOTHER HAS BEEN TRYING HARD TO RESIST THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT THIS YEAR.
AND SHE'S BEEN SUCCESSFUL SO FAR. BUT I KNOW SOMETHING SHE CAN'T RESIST...
12/24
I'M DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS
JUST LIKE THE ONES I USED TO KNOW!
SHE'S A SUCKER FOR BING.

R. W. Bendelow, Rugby, Warwickshire, UK
...Great magazine, value for money, without which I would not be aware of recent information on CDs & DVDs etc. I have just acquired the Avid 4-CD "Musical Autobiography" and this replaces the original Decca 5-LP set that I have had since the 50s.

Les Street, Cardiff, Wales, UK.
I've recently had the 4-CD set from Avid, the Bing Musical Autobiography plus a great 4th CD of rare Bing material. So thanks for being involved with Avid to get this beautiful set released...
(Editor: The Musical Autobiography has been welcomed by many. Our thanks must go the mastering engineer - Dave Bennett - and to Hugh Palmer who pulled the whole project together. It was an honour for me to be asked to write the sleeve notes. But not everyone is happy with the album, as you will read.)

Ken Gray, Pittsburgh, USA
Since I write so seldom, I must be irked! While it is great to have the Musical Autobiography generally available, part of the comments by Bing (the "chat") were left out. On the US records and the Japanese CD set, after "I'll Be Seeing You", Bing says:

> *"Oh, it's a lovely song. I think I would rather have written that than to have won the United States Amateur Golf Championship. 'Cause I'm a million to one shot in either field, believe me, but, well I'll be seeing you on the other side."*

This is not included on the Avid set, hence, to have a complete set, one still needs the Japanese CDs! How awful and disappointing! Someone was careless!

Moreover, the sound transfers on the film and radio material left something to be desired – it was not up to Jonzo standards! In addition, the selection of the additional radio and film material was a mystery to me. Why didn't you select material that we don't already have? There are plenty of KMH recordings that were only issued on private LPs that would have been much more welcome – for example – the "Bouncing With Bing" LP; not to mention commercial tracks that have not been on CD to date.

One additional complaint of a general nature. I still cannot understand why the club members in Britain do not give more support to the Jonzo series. Things would be issued more rapidly if the members in Britain were more supportive and more members purchased these fine CDs.

Not to end things on a negative note, I do thank you personally for the continued high quality of BING magazine. You do a great job and it is much appreciated.

P.S. Please print this in "letters to the editor" in BING magazine.
(Editor: Well, a few points to cover in Ken's letter.

Firstly, the missing dialogue. I thought to myself that the mastering engineer probably decided to leave the dialogue out as it might not make much sense talking about "the other side" on a CD. However, I spoke to Dave Bennett and he straightaway said that it was a human error and he sends his sincere apologies to all those upset at the omission.

As regards, the sound transfers of the Sennett material, I understand that Dave used several sources for the material and this is the best there was. The ICC was not involved in the selection of material for the album although when asked to write the notes, I was able to point out that one particular item had recently been used on another CD and so it was not included. However, in my view, most of the additional material would probably have been new to many of our members. Ken Gray is one of the foremost collectors in the world and one can understand that he would not be easily impressed.

Turning to the Jonzo CDs, John McNicholas has been complaining bitterly for 22 years about the lack of support from the UK members. I gather that UK members buy about 120 copies from each issue whilst USA members buy just over 200. In an effort to help, we in the ICC have done everything we can to promote the CDs. The ICC also purchases a number of CDs from each issue from club funds (see the annual accounts earlier in the issue). I cannot explain why there is apparently less support in the UK than the USA. Readers' comments would be welcome. If we don't support this series, it may not be able to continue.)

Mike O'Donoghue, Romford, Essex UK
Just thought you might be interested in my recent viewing of Bing's film of 1934 *She Loves Me Not.*

The first meeting between him and his female co-star Kitty Carlisle leads to a duet at the piano. Bing is supposed to be playing and he sings 'Straight From The Shoulder' right through, then she joins in for a reprise. He then renders 'Love In Bloom'. What struck me right away was the fact that they both seemed to be finding the whole thing most enjoyable. Bing is completely natural and is smiling broadly at times; Kitty Carlisle also seems to be having a good time throughout. I felt that there was definite rapport that made their singing a joy to hear, and boy did he sing.

I was curious enough to see if Gary Giddins had any light to share on this in his book. The following is what he had to say about this particular scene:

> *However aloof he may have acted between takes, he genuinely lights up as he sings 'Straight From The Shoulder' and 'Love In Bloom' at the thirty minute mark. Kitty too registers delight when they sing together. One reason the duets were so convincing is that Nugent, (the director) shot them live, an unusual and dangerous decision. "Why we did it live I'll never know," Kitty said. "I never asked questions."*

If you have not seen the film, it is well worth chasing

down. Speaking of which, I did think after seeing *She Loves Me Not* that it would be great if there was a video supplier who stocked all the Crosby films in mint condition. Then we could hear and see those early films when his voice had that unique quality which made him such a star. Maybe the Club should look into it.
(Editor: Bing's relationship with Kitty Carlisle crops up again in a subsequent page. It's probably the dream of us all to be able to obtain all Bing's films on DVD in perfect quality but sadly, it's very unlikely to happen. But there is good news every now and then - see Ken Crossland's Keeping Track for details of the release of 'We're Not Dressing' on DVD.)

Rev. Robert Murphy, The Catholic Chancery, Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri, USA
I don't know if you recall our correspondence of a few months back regarding Bing. I wrote an article for American Classic Screen magazine on Bing's support of me through the seminary and into the priesthood. Both Bing and Kathryn not only wrote often but welcomed me into their home in Hillsborough. I am currently sharing letters I received from Bing and Kathryn with Gary Giddins for the second volume of his biography of Bing. I wanted to show the kind and thoughtful support that both Bing and Kathryn have given me through the years.

(l to r) Father Brad Offutt (Chancellor of the Diocese), Father Bob Murphy and Claude Sasso (Vice Chancellor).

I was named Vicar General of our Diocese on July 3 of this year. The picture that ran in our Diocesan paper was taken in front of an original poster of *Going My Way* from 1944. When I was leaving a parish, the parishioners searched the Web to get an original poster and found one in Mexico City! As you know, American movies are often given different titles overseas. The little fat priest in the middle is me!

I sent Kathryn Crosby a copy of the picture that ran in our paper. Out of the blue, Kathryn called with warm wishes and congratulations. She closed with: "Father Bob, not even Fr. O'Malley became Vicar General." How typically warm and thoughtful of Kathryn to call. (From my standpoint, Fr. O'Malley would have made a better Vicar General than yours truly!) At any rate, I thought the readers of BING might find this interesting.

Alice Kane, Marengo, Illinois, USA
Thought I would let you and the rest of our club know that I found a puzzle in one the puzzle books I buy regularly, that I thought would interest everyone. The subject of the puzzle is none other than our boy! His puzzle is on page 23 and is puzzle # 18 in volume 141 of the "Bent & Wiggly Puzzles" book that is available on newsstands and magazine racks all across America right now. There is a list of words to find in the puzzle and I want to list the words I searched for concerning Bing. They are as follows:

> Bells of St. Mary's, Bob Hope, Crooner, Dixie Lee, Dorothy Lamour, Going My Way, Kathryn Grant, King Of Jazz, Liked Fishing, Owned Racehorses, Road Pictures, Sponsored Pro Am golf, The Country Girl, and White Christmas.

It was so heartening to find this puzzle because it's just one more great sign that our dear Bing is still being remembered today! I thought this would interest you and everyone else so I wanted to share it.

By the way, Malcolm, I own and love your book! I know a lot of research, to say the least, had to have gone into that. It was a real pleasure to see what our Bing was doing and when, back then.

I am a fairly new member to the club (I'm just entering my 2nd year) and am greatly enjoying my issues of BING magazine. I just wish my Dad, Carl Rogers, was still alive today to see the big fan I've become. He's the one who introduced me to Bing's music and taught me to love and respect the Great Man. Dad was one of the biggest fans Bing Crosby ever had. He was constantly telling me that my favorite singers were "no Bing Crosby"! I now own far more of Bing's albums than poor Daddy ever did. Dad just owned a few. I now own close to 30 of Bing's albums, including 5 World War 2 Kraft Music Hall Radio CD's! I just hope Daddy can hear the music through me!

That One Special Voice

Bing's niece, Carolyn Schneider, ponders Bing's Deoxyribonucleic acid - or DNA as it is better known.

Most of us are familiar with the meaning of the term "DNA". Although these initials have come to our attention in somewhat recent years, medical science has been aware of its existence for much longer. Those of us who are not professionals, but are simply interested in such things, use words like 'inherited' and 'ancestry' or

we say "it's in the genes."

Thinking along those lines, my mind settled on my own family, beginning with my grandparents and moving forward through the next three or four generations. Ours is a unique history, in that, my grandparents produced a son, one of their seven children, who became a world renowned celebrity, my uncle, Bing Crosby. His was a gift of talent unlike any other. "Where did it come from?" I wondered. "Is there some spark in his genetic chain?"

Although Uncle Bing's parents had some abilities in the area of musical entertainment, they by no means can be compared to the huge talent that would later be exhibited by their son called Bing. In retrospect, I believe my grandparents felt that during the years when they were raising their children, it was important to have music as part of daily family life. This proved to be a great influence on Bing's future and influenced the musical career choice of Bing's youngest sibling, band leader Bob Crosby.

If we take the point of view that exceptional talent is inherited, why is it then that all of Bing's brothers didn't have a similar voice? Now let's look at Uncle Bing's children: of the six sons that he fathered, why did none of them inherit his talent do you suppose?

I submit a different theory, one that says a special gift is given to certain individuals, making them very rare and subject to notoriety. While I do believe that certain talent traits can run in families, such as a son who follows in his father's footsteps and becomes a dentist like his dad for example, however, what I'm referring to here are the outstanding, one-of-a-kind people that achieve world-wide celebrity status, the ones who have instant name recognition, be they from the world of sports, entertainment, politics, finance or whatever. For example, take names like Sinatra, Pele, Trump, Churchill and the like. Yet how many of their siblings or offspring attained the same height of success, had that same gifted ability?

There is no question that Uncle Bing had a magical voice, whether speaking or singing, it was easily recognized, a voice that brought him fame and fortune in a career that lasted over forty years. Why and how was it given to him? Was it fate? Or luck? Or just a God given gift? If this fabulous voice was in his DNA, why don't the rest of us Crosby's have it? Instead, we are left swimming in the gene pool of life with everyone else, because special gifts of talent like his are given to very few. That's what makes them special, like Uncle Bing.

There was a joke going around years ago: an interviewer asked Kate, Bing's mother, "Mrs. Crosby, is it true that years ago you wouldn't let your young son Bing take music or voice lessons? How could you do that?" To which Kate replied, "How did I know that he was going to grow up to be Bing Crosby?"

I think that uncle Bing worked at his craft yet he knew darn well that audience approval of the next recording or hit song, are the things that really count. The music, the delivery of the lyrics and his gift of that special voice, came together to create the dynasty called "The Crosby Years." He made it look easy – being the best, staying on top – but I think even ***he*** realized the value of giving us a quality performance. As Uncle Bing once jokingly said, "you gotta' hit the low notes, 'cause that's where the money is."

And we all know that he hit plenty of those low notes, as evidenced by his popularity and record sales.

Carolyn Schneider

Was Bing unfriendly?

The Bing Crosby Internet Museum has a wonderful Bulletin Board where all sorts of people comment on many diverse matters. Earlier, in *Celluloid Crosby*, we read that Dorothy Lamour was a little critical of Bing's friendliness and a recent thread on the Internet Museum is relevant. It was started off by Fred Sevekow who said:

"Thought the following would be of interest. As we know, Kitty Carlisle is currently doing a "one woman" show, recalling and commenting upon many of the show business greats she knew or worked with over the past 70 years, including Bing. Well, she apparently just decided to include Palm Springs, California on her tour, appearing here this weekend. She was interviewed for an article appearing today in our local "Desert Sun" newspaper, and had this to say about Bing:
Q: You starred with Bing Crosby in *She Loves Me Not.*
A: Yes. I did two shows with Bing. And he never talked to me.
Q: Why Not?
A: (Laughing) I think he just didn't want to talk to me. The only time he did talk to me was when he showed me a nice, rather modest, diamond necklace, and asked me: "Do you think my wife would like this?" I said: "I'm sure she will love it!" And that was the end of it. But he must have liked me because he had to have OK'd me for his films. He had control (over) who starred with him.
Q: What do you think was significant about Bing?
A: He was simply the best singer I had ever heard. He was the best singer of the Big Band era singers.

****

Coming from a performer who appeared with the likes of Allan Jones, and knew most of the greats during the 30s and 40s, this praise for Bing's voice (often overlooked) warms the heart of this unabashed Crosby fan!"

Fred Sevekow

Mike O'Donoghue has already mentioned Kitty Carlisle's involvement in *She Loves Me Not* in our *Letters* section and Kitty obviously had very little to do with Bing off the set. However Fred's comments brought the following response from Ronald Sarbo.

"I would say that Bing was a VERY BUSY GUY who had to ration his time and attention so that he did not spread himself too thin. Coupled with Bing's natural "reserve" this may have led some to assume he did not like them when that may not have been the case."

Ronald Sarbo

Don Lamb followed on with:

"I agree entirely with Ronald Sarbo's opinion that much of what was interpreted as "unfriendliness" or "coldness" on Crosby's part was nothing more than just being exceptionally busy and mentally preoccupied.

Most of the people with whom Bing worked had only the immediate project at hand to worry about and therefore had lots of time on their hands during lulls in production to socialize on the set. Crosby always had many more fish to fry than just the movie he was engaged in making. During his active career he maintained a steady and active recording schedule, which necessitated not only time spent at the recording studio, but also hours spent in preparation listening to demo records of the songs he was to sing in these sessions and on his radio shows. He had a weekly radio show to prepare for, which meant taking the time to go over proposed scripts and making suggestions for changes and modifications. He had to confer with gag writers about jokes and musicians about arrangements. He had to rehearse these shows with his guests and then actually perform them. In addition to his own shows, he was always appearing as a guest performer on other shows.

He gave copious amounts of time appearing in benefit performances of all kinds. In addition to these duties, he also had business and corporate interests to attend to. He had to attend board meetings and to field questions and make business decisions on a daily basis. During the War, he was also kept busy entertaining at bond rallies and military bases. On top of all this, he had to set aside some time for recreation to preserve his sanity, and to spend time with his family. In short, Bing Crosby maintained a schedule which would have felled a bull elephant. It's hardly any wonder that he made use of any spare time taking care of business, instead of spending it schmoozing around with other people as they might have wished."

Don Lamb

All good stuff, then Ken Barnes joined the discussion.

"Before I met him and worked with him, I'd heard stories about Bing's "aloofness" and "coldness," and some people warned me that he wouldn't be like his easy-going image. Throughout the time I worked with him - six albums, two TV shows and two radio shows - he was as personable as he was professional. Not just a great performer but very much a team player. All the musicians and the backing singers enjoyed his company - as we all did.

So where did this so called "coldness" come from? Well, it could be that he wasn't so busy in the 1970s as he had been in the '30s and '40s or maybe he had mellowed with age. Be that as it may, I can only tell you that the Bing Crosby I knew was a most engaging fellow with a fund of jokes (some of them on the "blue" side) with which he frequently entertained us. He was a joy to work with and a pleasure to know, which is why I put together some snippets of his studio chatter in 'The Complete United Artists Sessions.'

This, more than any words I can say or write, shows what the REAL Bing Crosby was like."

Ken Barnes

Good old Ken! Then Howard Crosby (Bing's nephew) was persuaded to weigh in.

". . . As for the legendary "coldness", I saw it occasionally, but only around people he thought were "phonies." He was great fun on the golf course, I'm sure he was great fun with Ken in the studios; after all, he loved musicians. But if confronted by some artificial Hollywood type or Ivy League snob, he could turn to ICE. He just had no time for people like that.

If you wanted to make sure he would have nothing to do with you, all you had to do was tell him how GREAT or FANTASTIC you thought he was. He HATED people fawning over him, and in fact he pretty much hated all compliments, unless they were sort of backhanded. Something like, if he chipped in from off the green, you might say something like: "not bad, but if it hadn't hit the stick dead center, it woulda been six feet by!"

Hence the conflicting reports about his demeanor."

Howard Crosby

So, some interesting comments on a subject which surfaces frequently over the years. Well done all those who contributed to the debate.

BING ON THE BOX

Bert Bishop looks at recent Bing sightings on radio and television, starting this time with the UK scene.

In his remarkable biography of Bing - TROUBADOUR, a must for every Crosbyphile - Norman Wolfe suggests in Part 1 that in the 21st century almost nobody likes Bing. While this is taken out of context, it is broadly true now in that probably ninety per cent of the world's population have never even heard of him to judge whether they like him or not. In the closing scenes of the film *Yankee Doodle Dandy* George M. Cohan suffered the same fate; gone from the public eye and virtually forgotten. Fortunately, there *are* still a great many Crosby admirers even beyond the ICC who continue to enjoy his musical legacy and smile in recognition of his name. And they're not all of 'a certain age'.

Witness a programme that brought *True Love* to a couple celebrating their 73rd wedding anniversary and *Out Of This World* as a request for a teenager. Bing would have been only eight years old when the nonagenarian couple was born but dead for eleven long years when our discerning youngster first saw the light of day more than seven decades later. Remarkable! Complying with their requests was **David Lowe** on his 'Swingers & Singers' programme. Emanating from BBC Radio Bristol he is ably supported by Club members residing in the West Country, notably Len Hawkings and Maggie Ryan who keep this amiable presenter supplied with many of the latest releases and, thereby, this column with the relevant result. In featuring *Oh, Tell Me Why* David noted that there are no composer credits for this traditional song but, unusually for him, didn't pick up on the fact that this is a multi-track recording by Bing, also highly unusual in itself! David has a cut off point, around 1960, beyond which requests are not normally welcome; Bing is always the exception. Thus, his listeners were treated to the Alan Cohen accompanied track *As Time Goes By.* Written for the 1931 Broadway show *Everybody's Welcome*, by Herman Hupfeld, it was revived during the war when it was sung, memorably, by Dooley Wilson in the film *Casablanca.* Bing soon had this romantic ballad in his repertoire, when less than a month after the show's opening, he sang it on The Cremo Singer with two more performances shortly thereafter. Some twenty more renditions were to follow in his long career, perhaps most memorably as the antepenultimate song of his life.

Trevor Fry also featured Bing's 1976 version on his similarly, Bristol located 'The Late Show' along with a good variety of Crosby waxings ranging from the country and western *Oh Lonesome Me*, through such sing-a-longs as *Me And My Shadow* to the more plaintiff Bergman-Hamlisch nostalgic statement *The Way We Were.* Both David and Trevor have a good listener base and there are Bing tracks for every occasion most notably the Christmas season of course when all the old favourites were forthcoming this time around.

Some while ago Sunflower Records released two CDs of radio performances featuring Bing and Peggy Lee. These discs have proved a mine of material for **Christine Prentice** on her 'String Of Pearls' programme that airs in the Greater Manchester region. Among the most likeable she played were *Once And For Always,* a number from *Connecticut Yankee*; *Maybe You'll be There* with lyric by Sammy Gallop; one of those innumerable comparison songs *I Like You Just The Way You Are* and the far less appealing, downright cringingly awful number, even as a parody, *Be-bop Spoken Here*! Happily, this was overshadowed by the inherent effervescence of *How It Lies, How It Lies, How It Lies* on which John Scott Trotter takes over from Vic Schoen and Miss Lee from Evelyn Knight (the two other principal participants on the commercial recording) to good effect greatly enhanced by Bing's abundance of ad libs.

Also from the more northerly region of England **Frank Wappat** continues to eulogize over Bing, his favourite singer, Al Bowlly notwithstanding; Frank being the founder of the Al Bowlly Society still remembered and revered in *Memory Lane* magazine and by aficionados everywhere. Frank is of the opinion that *I'm Falling In Love With Someone* and *Gypsy Love Song* are Frances Langford's two greatest recordings. Considering her extensive repertoire, Frank's comments are clearly an equal tribute to her co-duettist on these two Victor Herbert songs from turn of the century operetta. Frank rarely strays from Bing's 'Thirties decade and 1933, in particular, was a peak year producing *My Love* and *I've Got To Pass Your House* which our Tyneside presenter included on his 'Stars On Sunday' show.

The two aforementioned Victor Herbert duets had another outing on BBC Radio Derby's 'Memorable Melodies' programme hosted by the popular presenter **Mike Carey.** Most readers of this column will identify this station with the ICC's very own 'likely lads' (Arthur Blood and Maurice Beardmore) who promote Mr C. on a regular basis, courtesy of Mike's farrago of popular music. In playing *Tomorrow's My Lucky Day* it must be assumed that Mike has access to information in 'Bing - Just For The Record' as he noted that it was Bing's 1628th recording. Often quoted as Bing's best golfing song, this was the last time that he was to commercially record a Johnny Burke–Jimmy Van Heusen number. In partnership they composed eighty songs for Bing with Burke writing the lyrics for a further thirty-eight with other composers. In an innovative diversion, Mike shunned the 1957 release of *When I Take My Sugar To Tea* to bring to his listeners the complete musical score from *Dream House*, the Mack Sennett soundtrack which includes that number now available on the Avid autobiography set. The following month's calendar choice of *Poor Old Rover* was spun with mixed feelings and the comment 'this was such a cheerful show before that'. One of Jack Kapp's less inspired catalogue fillers.

Yet another calendar song to be aired was the re-vamped *Well, Did You Evah?* Originally from la Grable's movie *Du Barry Was A Lady*, Cole Porter came up with some new lyrics more appropriate to the Fortnum & Mason of popular vocalists. With the Yuletide season soon to follow, *The Bells Of St Mary's* was among those featuring Mr. Christmas himself. Many U.K. ICC members are within listening distance of this station. Mike Carey is out there for you!

OF ROBINS AND RANGES

One of the most prolific lyricists of the first half of the 20th century was Leo Robin who had his songs featured in shows or films in an unbroken sequence year by year from 1926 to 1954. Quite a number of these were Bing movies and in partnership with Ralph Rainger, he was responsible for a dozen numbers all of which [apart from *Buy, Buy Bonds*] were Crosby classics. So, inevitably, these are going to turn up on the wireless fairly frequently - especially on 'Harmony Night'. Just think of *Please; June In January; Love In Bloom* and *You're A Sweet Little Headache* and you have some idea of the requested output from our friends to be heard on the various BBC Thames Valley links at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings. Bing with Lennie Hayton proclaiming in 1933 that he would not exchange his *Home On The Range* and, for Stan White, that beautiful ballad *Blue Shadows And White Gardenias* being further examples of the good taste of **Bill and Angela Rennells'** listeners.

When The Red, Red Robin is a popular choice from Ken Barnes' 'Bing Crosby Meets Al Jolson' 2-CD set. Being an upbeat number it suits the tempo of 'Gold For Grown Ups' and is sort of Christmassy and our old mate **Paul Barnes** is always looking for variations on the theme anyway. Further examples were *White Christmas* and *Silver Bells* both with Ella from 'Swingin' With Bing' (again a success story for Ken) along with the reindeer team led by young *Rudolph* with further deviation from the norm by playing *White Christmas* again from the new Avid release which has Bing proclaiming that a 'jackdaw with a cleft palette' could have put over Irving Berlin's classic just as well. One small correction here, Paul, it's the 1947 version on this autobiography set not 1942. Not your fault as the booklet gives the wrong date! When so much goes into the production of an excellent package, that includes early movie soundtrack songs and very detailed notes, how can they get it wrong on the most famous recording in the history of popular music?

Also from the autobiography set, Paul featured Bing's re-recordings of his first, formal solo *Muddy Water; Mississippi Mud* and *My Kinda Love* plus the extended, publicity disc version of *The Waiter, The Porter And The Upstairs Maid* and *Yes, Indeed!*, all prompted by the playing of the December calendar choice of *The Bells Of St. Mary's* here again with Bing's intro dialogue from the Avid release. Something of a mini Bing-fest from our East Anglian authority on all that's best in the arena of recorded popular music, to say the least!

HAPPY THE MAN

From *Side By Side* in 1927 to fifty years later and *The Only Way To Go,* the legacy of Bing's philosophical songs is considerable with most of the lyrics speculating on contentment in oftimes disadvantaged circumstances. Whilst the latter would hardly apply to Mr. Crosby, such songs could well be, to some extent, reflective of his own life; after all he did call his autobiography 'Call Me Lucky'! Following on from this theme **Russell Davies** proposed, and played, Irving Berlin's recognition of the 'Depression Years' *The Little Things In Life* as interpreted by Bing with the Gus Arnheim Orchestra as being one of those, be content with what you've got numbers.

VICTOR
For best results use Victor Needles
22580-A
THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE-Fox Trot
Gus Arnheim and His Cocoanut Grove Orchestra
Vocal refrain by Bing Crosby

A hit for Arnheim, and Bing I guess, but not really a lot of help to those in a bread line at that time as the inherent truth of *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?* was still two years hence. To follow up Russell played another example of cheerful sufficiency only from many years later: *The Best Things In Life Are Free.* This De Sylva-Brown-Henderson song dates from 1927 and the show *Good News* but it was twenty years before Bing first sang it, on Philco Radio Time, and three decades later on record with the Pete Moore backing. From the album 'Songs I Wish I Had Sung [The First Time Around]' Russell Davies' Sunday afternoon BBC R2 programme also gave us Bing's nod to 'The Thin Gin' [that's Mr. Sinatra to the non-cognizant!] by selecting Frank's recording of *This Love Of Mine* as being worthy of his own, Crosby treatment. In the sleeve notes Bing writes: "[Frank] has been connected with so many great songs.....for my taste I like to go back a bit when he was with Dorsey.....he sang simply and with affecting sincerity."

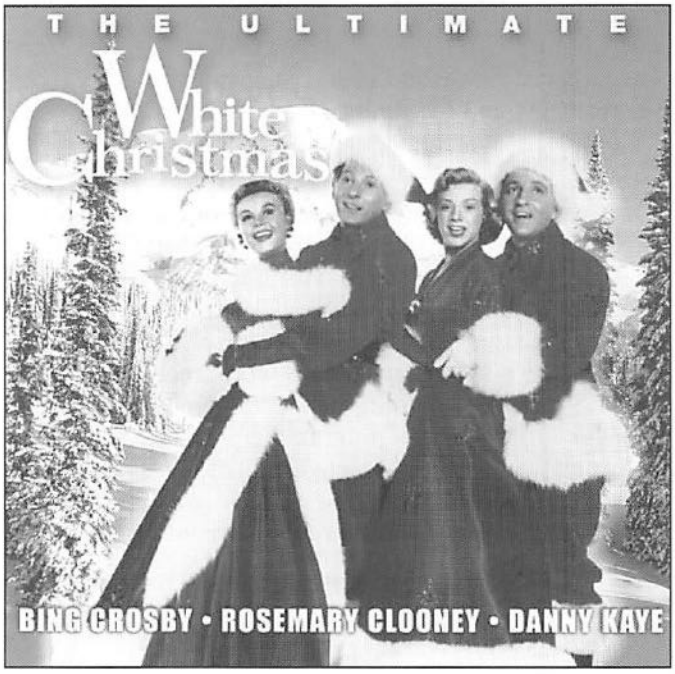
I guess most have accepted that the opening strains of *True Love* were from a concertina, as suggested in the film *High Society*; but now we have Russell assuring us, via a piano accordion virtuoso, that these lilting notes come from the much larger instrument. Shattered illusions? Not really; after all it was the singer that made this romantic ballad a million seller - the visual image remains secondary. For which see page thirty of our last magazine!

Most of our other players in the radio presenters field have been forthcoming as well; **David Jacobs, Desmond Carrington** and **Howard Leader** with tracks as diverse as *Mr. Booze; Go West, Young Man* and *She Is The Sunshine Of Virginia* all of which have been good examples of the Crosby-on-record, musical legacy which we have inherited. Letters from ICC members form a part of their postbags and this liaison keeps the

Crosby flag flying. If you have a little time to write or email it always does the trick!

KENTUCKY BABE

In January on BBC Radio 2, Ruthie Henshall presented a four-part, half-hourly programme entitled *Rosie All the Way - The Rosemary Clooney Story*. That Bing played a major role in her career is well known to us with the film and song *White Christmas* being featured. Much was made of his support, both morally and practically, at the time of her nervous breakdown with the 'Seventies concerts being the principal reason for her recovery. There were excerpts from Rosemary's interviews and her brother [father of actor George Clooney] made extensive contributions. Rosie and her sister Betty were a great 'sister act' and their eventual duet of Irving Berlin's *Sisters*, from the only film she ever made with Bing, can be heard on the Pulse release of 'The Ultimate White Christmas' PLSCD 771 which also includes her great ballad from that film *Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me*. A really excellent CD with all the right people singing the songs as well as the Peggy Lee / Trudy Stevens stand-ins. See *Keeping Track* for more information.



Sorry, but it crops up yet again! *White Christmas* was to be heard in the background all through a festive season of Britain's ever popular 'soap', EastEnders. Whether its rival 'Corrie' was similarly disposed to remember Bing I have no idea!

Don't forget that you can catch ICC member **Jim Reilly's Bing Crosby hour** on the Internet Thursdays. (8-9 p.m. UK time on Angel Radio). This is a weekly event from a thriving community station operating on the English south coast (www.angelradio.co.uk). Keep up the good work, Jim!'

Once again U.K. Crosby films are few and far between. The infrequently seen *Mr. Music* and *Here Come The Waves* were real bonuses though. I *did* watch *High Society* on Christmas Eve, but one of those serendipity moments arose as the final credits rolled to the spooky thriller, *Woman In White*, when Bing's complete recording of *Did You Ever See A Dream Walking?* totally distracted me from the cast! Otherwise those films featured were as follows:

Here Comes The Groom	Sky Cinema
Here Come The Waves	Sky Cinema
High Society	BBC2 / TCM
Mr. Music	Sky Cinema
Road To Rio	Sky Cinema
That's Entertainment	TCM

****

John Walton posted this news about another radio show on the Crosby Internet Museum:

"I was pleased to catch Ken Barnes' hour-long tribute to Bing's partnership with Bob Hope on Saga 106.6fm. Ken's enthusiasm for their work in the 'Road' movies came through very strongly. Later in the day, after further Bing tracks on a subsequent programme, the presenter, Andy Marriott, mentioned that more Bing would be broadcast over the festive period. Saga 106.6fm is Saga's English East Midlands station but all Saga stations - National, West Midlands, London and Scotland - play Bing tracks and can be easily accessed on www.saga.co.uk. (Select 'radio')."

Frank Toner, from Blanchardstown, Ireland, was able to advise us that:

"Over here in Ireland we had a double filling of Bing over the festive season. Firstly, on Christmas Eve, on our national radio station [RTE Radio 1] there was a radio program entitled 'Christmas With Bing' which went out on the airwaves at 11.04 p.m. It featured the 1955 *Christmas Sing With Bing* show. Secondly, if the above was not enough, on December 28th. 2005 on our National TV Channel [RTE One] at 7.30 p.m. there was a half-hour length documentary entitled 'Bing's Favourite Irishman' expounding the relationship between our own George O'Reilly and Bing." Editor Malcolm will provide a short review at the end of this article.

SEEN AND HEARD IN THE USA

The History Channel in the USA in February showed a programme called 'High Tech Hitler' which had to do with the many inventions and innovations Hitler's Germany came up with during the 1930s and '40s to supplement its war machine and how one of these, the improved tape recorder, was a tool of the propaganda arm of the Third Reich. The programme described how the rest of the world benefited after hostilities had ceased and John Mullin was shown with one of the original recorders used to transcribe Bing's Philco Radio Time. Bing was seen in still photographs and in footage from one of the Sennett two-reelers. Even *Where The Blue Of The Night* was heard! It is not known when or if the History Channel will show the programme in the UK.

On Sunday 4th December on "The BEST Radio Variety Show....PERIOD!" broadcasting on KCXL-1140AM-Liberty, from 5pm-7pm, (or on the "Surfer-Network Player" from www.kcxlsports.com) the "Life and Career of "The Old Groaner" himself - Bing Crosby" - was featured. The In-Studio guest was none other than our own **Steven Lewis**, the man behind the

"Bing Crosby Internet Museum." Listener's 'phone calls were invited saying what their favourite Bing Crosby tune or movie was and why.

Also, Carolyn Schneider has been busy promoting her uncle Bing. On Sunday 11th December she was interviewed by telephone by Lorne Harasen (one of our members) of the Saskatchewan based station CKRM. This was around 10:30 a.m. and the show could have been heard also on the Internet at http://www.620ckrm.com/

On a further occasion, 24th December, Carolyn was interviewed on the Las Vegas based KDWN 720AM by Pete Moss between 8 and 8:30 p.m. Here again this station can be heard on the Net at http://www.kdwn.com/listen.html.

Hardworking Greg Van Beek set his alarm early for the 4th annual Club 60 Bing Crosby Christmas broadcast at 8:30 a.m. with Tom Shanahan on WTKM radio (104.9FM) in Hartford, WI, Wednesday, 21st December. Greg certainly does a great job with these Christmas broadcasts.

And if you want to hear really rare Bing broadcasts on the net or on your iPod via a podcast, you should go the Radio Memories Network site at http://radiomemories.libsyn.com/. John Grimmett, producer of the Radio Journeys programme, has been featuring Bing's earliest known radio recordings presented in chronological order. In December he ran "Fifteen Minutes with Bing Crosby," the partial show from September 1931 and he followed this with excerpts from "The Cremo Singer," the 8½ minute recording commonly circulated among collectors (though hard to find), containing portions of the Cremo show from November and December 1931. John gave the ICC a nice plug too.

THE SILVER SCREEN

Films and shows screened in the U.S.A. were fairly plentiful thanks mainly to the wonderful TCM festival outlined by Martin McQuade in the last issue. Bing was TCM's Star of the Month in December when no less than 18 of his films were shown. Robert Osborne introduced the films and he also plugged Gary Giddins' book too! Many thanks, TCM for a wonderful job, even if you did get Bing's picture the wrong way round.

Also, AMC made *Holiday Inn* its Movie of the Month in December and they utilised snatches of video from the film on their web site to promote it. Very impressive! Here's the complete list of the movies shown featuring Bing.

Bing on TV in the USA: November – March

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,	TCM
Christmas at the Hollywood Palace	PBS
Going Hollywood	TCM
Going My Way	TCM
Great Things About the Holidays	Bravo
Here Comes the Groom	TCM
High Society	TCM
High Time	Fox Movie Channel
Holiday Inn	AMC
Let's Make Love	AMC
Man On Fire	TCM
My Favorite Blonde	TCM
My Favorite Brunette	TCM
Pennies From Heaven	TCM
Road to Bali	TCM
Road to Morocco	TCM
Road to Singapore	TCM
Road to Utopia	TCM
Road to Zanzibar	TCM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	HBO
Scared Stiff,	Cinemax
Stagecoach	Encore / Fox Movie Channel
The Bells of St. Mary's	TCM
That's Entertainment	TCM
The Country Girl	TCM
The Greatest Show on Earth	Cinemax
The Princess and the Pirate	TCM

****

A recent visitor to my Crosby room said she quite liked him and followed up with "Is he still alive?" This is what we're up against. His one-hundred-and-third birth date will have come and gone when the next edition of this magazine is due. Not a special anniversary, it's true, but always worth recalling. So, for all who read this column, please remember to write to your favourite wireless programme presenter some time in April with a request in recognition of this event. While all those radio folk whose names appear here are predisposed to Bing, a little reminder is often needed!

Bert Bishop, February 21, 2006

(Editor: Thanks Bert for your usual comprehensive look at Bing's appearances on radio and TV. Bert mentioned a TV show shown by RTE in Ireland on December 28 which looked at the relationship between our own George O'Reilly and Bing. I have received a DVD of the show and can now provide a short review.)

BING'S FAVOURITE IRISHMAN

This 25 minute documentary was a warm and affectionate tribute to Bing with a particular focus on his Irish connections through George O'Reilly and Bridget Brennan (who acted as a nanny to Bing's children). Beautifully put together, using rare archive footage, many still photos and often with Bing's singing voice in the background, there were specially recorded contributions from Kathryn Crosby, George O'Reilly,

actor Milo O'Shea, singer Liam Devally and Nenagh journalist Gerry Slevin.

George told about first meeting Bing in 1953 and how the relationship developed with Bing arranging for Nat King Cole to open George's record shop in Dublin and persuading stars such as Louis Armstrong to drop in at the shop. George described his visits to Hollywood where Bing introduced him to many of the top stars of the day. The making of the TV show *A Little Bit Of Irish* in Dublin in 1966 was covered in some detail with black and white extracts from the actual show being seen. Milo O'Shea (one of the featured artists in that show) recalled: 'I was dying to meet him. And it was very funny because I said: "May I have your autograph?" And he said: "Aren't you Milo O'Shea, who appeared in Ulysses? Aren't you Milo O'Shea who played in Barbarella with Jane Fonda?" And I said: "Yes". And he said: "Well, could I have your autograph?"'

George described Bing as "Warm, friendly, shy" and then he made me smile when he said that he too was shy! Those of you who have met George will find that hard to accept!

Towards the end of this charming programme, we saw extracts from the splendid 'Remembering Bing' tribute George put on at Dublin's Mahony Hall last October before switching to footage of Kathryn Crosby singing 'White Christmas' at Lord and Taylor's Department store in Manhattan last November. George's closing comments included the words "Hard to believe that a young fan can get so close to the greatest entertainer of the twentieth century."

Congratulations to RTE and producer / director Karen McGrath for this splendid tribute which deserves to be seen in other countries across the world. We hope to make arrangements to show it at our Leeds meeting in October.

Malcolm Macfarlane

ONCE IN A WHILE

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Alan Fisher, who was Bing's Butler for 15 years passed away on January 7th after a long illness. He had first started work as a footman at Buckingham Palace and had gone on to work for the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. He was with the Crosbys until 1978 when he joined the Spencer family at Althorp, before becoming butler to Prince Charles and Princess Diana immediately after their marriage. He worked for the Prince for three years. Alan was always very supportive to Crosby fans. He attended the prestigious function arranged by John Marshall at the Waldorf Hotel, London in 1983 and he gave John a long interview which was issued on cassette at the time. In November 1999, your Editor and several other ICC members had dinner with Kathryn Crosby at Browns Hotel in London and Alan was present. He was very friendly and charming and arising from our meeting he arranged to come to our annual Leeds event in October, 2000. Full details of his most interesting presentation at our meeting were contained in BING #126 (winter, 2000).

Alan and Norma Fisher with Bing and Kathryn.

When giving the sad news of Alan's demise on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum, there were a number of very nice responses recalling Alan's kindnesses and let me quote from Arne Fogel's contribution:

"Spoke to Mr. Fisher twice, briefly, in April of 1977 on the day I got to interview Bing, via phone, at his home (I was in Minnesota). Once, in the morning, and once more in the early evening as he transferred the phone over to Bing for my interview. Both times, his devilish sense of humor was evident.

First of all, in the morning, I spoke to him via my bedroom phone as we made plans for my evening call. It must've been obvious to him that I was young, a broadcast novice, and tremendously awed by the thought of communicating directly with his boss. It was then that Fisher told me that Bing was to have "dental surgery" that afternoon (hence the entry in Malcolm's "Day By Day"). As we settled on a time for the interview call, Fisher said to please "just hold for a moment", and the line went to silence for a minute or so. When the line came back on, I heard the unmistakable voice of Bing, in the distance, finishing up a sentence: he had been in the room the whole time I was talking to Fisher! I went numb with excitement and said to Fisher, "That sounds like a very familiar voice in the background!" To which Fisher said, in mock annoyance, "Who, him?" then he must've aimed the phone Bing's way, as Bing yelled "Hellooo, hellooo" towards the phone. The biggest, most awesome thrill of my life. Then Fisher, knowing that he probably made this kid pee himself, calmly came back on the phone and finished up our arrangements.

Later that evening, at the appointed time, I called the Crosby household from the KUXL-AM studio. Talked to Fisher again briefly, tried to sound as professional and "together" as possible, but Fisher wouldn't have it: "Are you all ready, Mr. Fogel? ....Don't be so nervous! You sound too nervous!..." then, just before handing the phone over to his boss, he offered this clincher: "...You know, I'm not at all in awe of this LIVING LEGEND, try not to be yourself!" - and with that, the next voice I heard was Crosby's. In retrospect, I realize that this man was one-of-a-kind, and trying his best to help this nervous nellie see the humor of the situation. At the time, I didn't even begin to understand where he was

coming from, I was so petrified and excited, all at the same time - Imagine doing one of your very first radio interviews with the lifelong hero and idol. Well, I'm so glad I had that opportunity, and I'm glad Alan Fisher was there to enhance and color the experience with his own special humor and approach, which has helped to make the memory so much more vivid in my mind forever. Here's to you, Mr. Fisher!"

Arne Fogel

Skitch Henderson, the Grammy-winning conductor who lent his musical expertise to Frank Sinatra and Bing before founding the New York Pops and becoming the first "Tonight Show" bandleader, died on November 1. He was 87. One of the highlights of the Hofstra event in 2002 was the presentation by Skitch. Speaking very lucidly and sincerely, he described how he met Bing in the late 1930s at a social event and at his request played "Moonburn" for him. They went to the Rose Bowl together, became friends and later Skitch went off to be a fighter pilot with the RAF in WWII in North Africa. He bumped into Bing in London in 1944 and he described Bing as being like a surrogate father to him and "a rare human being." Although taciturn at times, Bing took a real interest in Skitch's welfare and it appears that he may have had a hand in having Skitch transferred to safer military duties. As we know, Bing insisted on having Skitch as his pianist on *Philco Radio Time* and this really launched his career.

Bing also gave "Skitch" his stage name (he was christened Lyle Russell Cedric Henderson). Skitch said that Bing was the most disciplined performer he ever worked with and that it meant a lot to Skitch for him to be at the Hofstra conference on behalf of Bing. Bing often wrote to him giving advice such as "Be good to the workers." Apart from his Philco stint in the 1940s, Skitch worked with Bing in 1966 when he guested on a Hollywood Palace show with him and the Mills Brothers.

Skitch became a household name in television's infancy when NBC pegged him as the bandleader for Steve Allen's "Tonight Show" in 1954. Henderson lost the job after Jack Paar took over as host, but got it back in 1962 and was bandleader for the first four years of Johnny Carson's late-night reign. He founded the New York Pops in 1983, using popular tunes to make orchestral music exciting. He turned the New York Pops into the nation's largest independent symphonic pops orchestra and the only one in New York specializing in popular American music.

Next, Norman Wolfe reports on the death of one of Bing's closest advisers.

Basil Francis Grillo, Bing Crosby's business manager for about 30 years, died January 12 at his home in Camarillo, Calif. Mr. Grillo was 95.

He was hired in 1945, by Crosby's brother Everett, who had held the post, and by the Crosby family attorney, John O'Melveny. O'Melveny had met Mr. Grillo while he was employed by the Arthur Andersen accounting firm in Los Angeles. Prior to that, he had worked as an auditor for the state of California, following his graduation from the University of California at Berkeley. He grew up in San Francisco.

Mr. Grillo was instrumental in the formation of Bing Crosby Entertainment and its successor company, Bing Crosby Productions, (BCP) and played in a major role in the amassing of the Crosby fortune. Crosby's confidence in him extended to granting him power of attorney in many fiscal matters including contracts with guest performers on radio and television programs.

He moved to Camarillo in 1972 and enjoyed golf at the Las Posas Country Club where he served as treasurer and as a member of the board of directors. In recent years, he always attended a reunion luncheon of people who had worked on Crosby's personal staff or for BCP. It is held annually at the Paramount Studio Commissary in Hollywood.

A memorial service, celebrating his life, was held January 21 in Camarillo. He is survived by four generations of family members.

Norman Wolfe

Sheree North, the actress, died on November 4 at the age of 72. In the mid-fifties, the blonde-haired dancer and actress seemed to appear out of nowhere, featuring as a guest on Bing's first TV show in 1954 and also on Ed Sullivan's TV show and occupying the cover of *Life* magazine, a slot normally reserved for stars of the calibre of Garbo and Grace Kelly. The headline was: "Sheree North takes over from Marilyn Monroe." After only two minor films roles she was so famous that, when she got married, she wore horn-rimmed glasses and a red wig to escape public and press attention. By the end of the decade, however, she could not attract film producers' attention whatever she wore. However she had a persistence and a genuine talent that saw her work her way back into movies via guest spots on such television series as *The Untouchables* (1963) and *The Virginian* (1964). She aged gracefully and established herself as a serious actress, appearing with Henry Fonda in *Madigan* (1968) and with John Wayne, Lauren Bacall and James Stewart in Wayne's last film *The Shootist* (1976). Latterly, she went back to television and further developed her skills as a comic actress with recurring roles in the sitcoms *Mary Tyler Moore* (1974-75), *The Golden Girls* (1985-89) and *Seinfeld* (1995-98).

Curt Gowdy, the smooth voice of American sports history, a welcome companion who brought listeners Ted Williams' last home run, the first Super Bowl and dozens of other dramatic moments, died on February 20. He was 86. Gowdy spent 15 years as the Boston Red Sox's main play-by-play announcer from 1951-65. He left the Red Sox for a 10-year stint as the baseball broadcaster on NBC's "Game of the Week" until 1975. An avid outdoorsman, the native of Green River, Wyoming, was also host of the *American Sportsman* series on ABC from the early 1960s into the 1980s. On that programme, former presidents Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush appeared in fishing segments. Other guests on the fishing and hunting show were Ted Williams, quarterback Terry Bradshaw, actor Andy Griffith, comedian Jonathan Winters and of course Bing, who often appeared with his friend Phil Harris. Gowdy was inducted into the broadcast wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1984 and into the American Sportscaster's Hall of Fame in 1985. The Curt Gowdy State Park was established in Wyoming in 1971. It was nice to see that the ABC 'World News Tonight' TV obit

of Curt closed with a clip of Bing on an *American Sportsman* show singing the line "Aren't you glad we've got Curt Gowdy on our team" to the tune of 'Mr. Gallagher & Mr. Shean'.

Finally, Keith Parkinson sends an obituary for:
Loulie Jean Norman – the delightfully named Loulie Jean died on August 2nd. 2005, at the age of 92. To Bing followers she will be remembered for her soprano voice contributions to his radio renditions of songs such as "Beyond The Reef", "I Got Lucky in the Rain" and "The Story of Sorrento" aired between 1948 and 1950 for the Philco and Chesterfield shows. To the rest of the western world she remains the anonymous wordless vocalist on the opening credits to the original television "Star Trek" series. Just as her Crosby connection is rarely highlighted, so her other musical contributions are kept in the closet. The reason for that was to preserve the credibility of some of Hollywood's non-singing performers. Thus she was the voice for:
Diahann Carroll in *Porgy & Bess* (1959)
Juliet Prowse in *G. I. Blues* (1960)
Stella Stevens in *Too Late Blues* (1961).
All good films of their kind. She was recording without any significant success before her Crosby radio appearances, most notably with Mel Torme. It might have been the influence of her husband, Gordon Jenkins, which provided a re-entry into the recording studio in the late 1950s. Anonymously, of course. She was heard on the Spike Jones album "In Stereo". She assisted Hollywood star impressionist Paul Frees on horror film parodies. She was backup vocalist on the Elvis Presley recording of "Moonlight Swim" from his *Blue Hawaii* film on 1961. Her impressive range was also featured in The Tokens' 1961 hit "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" and she was the vocal talent behind the 'Crazy Soprano Ghost' in Disney Theme Park's *The Haunted Mansion*. She completely improvised her shrieking in her role as an opera-singing phantomess. All in all, an unsung singer.

Keith Parkinson

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

In Curt Gowdy's obituary, mention was made of Bing and his buddy Phil Harris appearing on the *American Sportsman* series. Gord Atkinson looks at the man who may have been Bing's closest friend.

Despite his public reputation as a hard drinking, back-slapping ne'er-do-well, **Phil Harris** was a thoughtful, kind-hearted man who had countless friends and admirers. To know Phil was to love him. His warm personality and captivating sense of humour never failed to charm and delight people from all walks of life. No one was a closer friend and admirer of the fun loving, multi-talented comedian and band leader than Bing Crosby.

Long before I met Phil and we became friends, Bing had regaled me with anecdotes about their golf and hunting expeditions. Once when they were driving back to Los Angeles from Palm Springs, they passed a distillery late at night. With its chimneys belching smoke, Bing turned to Phil and said with tongue-in-cheek, "you see Phil, they're making it faster than you can drink it!" "Yeah", Phil replied, "but I've got them working overtime."

On another occasion when Bing was touring through the south Phil came along for the ride. In Nashville, at a press conference, a reporter asked Bing why they were in town. His wry reply convulsed the media gathering: "Oh, Phil wanted to place a wreath on Jack Daniel's grave."

Their great friendship began during their early years in Hollywood. They shared a love of sports and outdoor living.

"We just hit it off," Phil told me, "we began in the business at the same time and we shared the same interests. Bing had a world of friends. We would go to Mexico and he would do a Spanish interview and he would do the same thing (interviews) in France. He was loved all over the world. He was a unique fella. He was true, he was honest, intelligent, he could converse on any subject. You didn't need anyone else when you were around him. The greatest compliment in my life was when it was quoted that he said that I was one of his closest friends, because he had millions of friends."

Phil was born June 24, 1904 in Linton, Indiana. He was 91 when he left us in 1995. He died of heart failure with his wife, Alice, by his side. His father, who led a band of his own, taught him the rudiments of music. Raised in Nashville, Tennessee, he became one of the best drummers of the jazz era. A true son of the south, he loved Dixieland music and paid tribute to his roots with one of his most identifiable songs, his theme, *That's What I Like About the South*. In the 1940's, fronting his own band, he had a string of novelty hit records. Incidentally, the Latin maestro, Xavier Cugat, began his Hollywood career as a violinist with the Harris orchestra.

It was on Jack Benny's radio program that Phil became a household name. He was Jack's band leader and frequent comedy foil. During the 18 years he was on the classic comedy show, his public persona was developed as a carefree, irresponsible tippler. He remembered Benny with great affection.

"Jack's father, Mr. Kubelski," he recalled, "wanted him to be a concert violinist and during all the years we were together Jack took lessons from my first violinist. Contrary to his radio image, he was an accomplished musician. He was a perfectionist – working all the time.

"I was one of the few performers he would let into the writing room. He was a great protector of characters. If you wanted to hear Rochester, Dennis Day, Don Wilson, his wife, Mary, or myself, you had to listen to the Benny show because we were exclusive – and we got paid that way. He was the exact opposite to his penny-pinching character – he paid off like a slot machine." On one classic program, Benny was having dinner at the home of the elegant, suave, English actor, Ronald Colman, when he mentioned Phil's name. Colman's immediate reaction got one of the longest and most sustained audience laughs on radio: "Please!", he said, "don't mention that name while I am eating."

Bing was one of the earliest guests on the Benny show and a welcome visiting star over the years.

Following his years with Benny, Phil appeared with his wife of 54 years, the reigning Hollywood star of the 1930s and '40s, Alice Faye, in their own situation radio comedy series. Their two daughters, Alice and Phyllis, appeared with them.

Late in his life, Phil was in demand at the Disney studios as the voice of storybook characters in the feature length animated films, *The Aristocats*, *Robin Hood*, *Fox and Hounds* and the *Jungle Book*. His performance as the happy-go-lucky, shiftless, Baloo, the bear in the *Jungle Book* was a soundtrack classic. He was never more delightful and easy-going than when he introduced the Oscar nominated song, *The Bare Necessities*.

Bing at every opportunity when touring with Phil would ask him to sing one of his many novelty comedy songs. No one made him laugh louder and more often than Phil. "He could talk about any subject," Bing told me "and you would laugh so loud your sides would hurt – you would have to leave the room."

Among my cherished mementos is a hand-written note from Phil, thanking me for sending him a complete set of my radio series, *The Crosby Years*, which he called "the most treasured gift" he had ever received.

When we met at Bing's alma mater, Gonzaga University, in May 1981 for the unveiling of the Crosby bronze statue, Phil remembered fondly his close friendship with Bing. "Few people know that he was very religious. No matter where we were, we could be in Africa or Mexico, fishing or touring, if there was a way for him to get to mass on a Sunday he would be there, even if he had to hire a private plane.

"He used to get up every morning when we were traveling and sing. I'd wake up and he would be whistling and singing. He could really whistle and he loved to sing. We traveled together so often that Alice used to joke that I only came home to pick up my laundry."

Gord and Phil at Gonzaga in 1981.

One of the great privileges of my life was introducing Phil on stage at the Gonzaga ceremony and later that evening exchanging memories of Bing with him. That was 25 years ago and as I have grown older, I often recall a typical, amusing, wry remark he made on that memorable day: "If I knew I was going to live this long I would have taken better care of myself."

I am proud to say that Bing's closest friend, Phil Harris, was my friend.

Gord Atkinson

Keeping Track

***Ken Crossland** looks at the new releases.*

COMPACT DISCS

Three in row! More Jonzo Chronologicals I mean and for the third issue running, it's great to be able to lead off with news of two more extensions to the series that meticulously presents Bing's recording output in strict chronological order. Volumes 42 & 43 are now available, taking the complete Crosby recordings now available on CD to January 1947. Details are as follows:

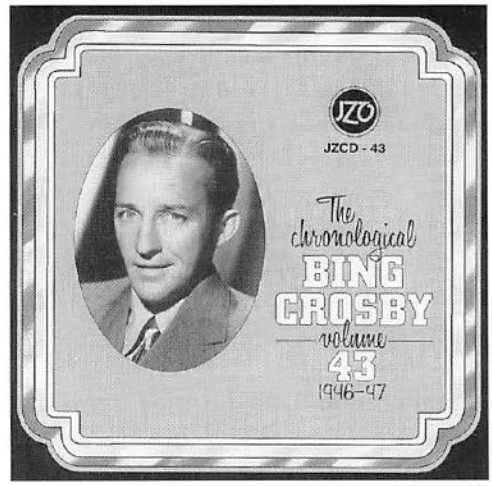
The Chronological Bing Crosby Volume 42 Jonzo JZCD-42 UK £10.60

1. Just My Luck* 2. You May Not Love Me (-A)* 3. You May Not Love Me (-B)* 4. They Say It's Wonderful 5. A Gal In Calico (L4134-A) 6. When Irish Eyes Are Smiling (-A) 7. When Irish Eyes Are Smiling (-?) 8. A Gal In Calico (L4169-A) 9. Oh, But I Do 10. That Tumbledown Shack In Athlone 11. (Get Your Kicks On) Route 66 (with The Andrews Sisters) 12. South America, Take It Away (with The Andrews Sisters) 13. Pretending 14. Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love 15. Lullaby (from "Jocelyn") 16. Where My Caravan Has Rested 17. All By Myself 18. Blue Skies 19. You Keep Coming Back Like A Song 20. (Running Around In Circles) Getting Nowhere 21. Everybody Step 22. A Serenade To An Old Fashioned Girl

The Chronological Bing Crosby Volume 43 Jonzo JZCD-43 UK £10.60

1. A Couple Of Song And Dance Men (with Fred Astaire) 2. I'll See You In C-U-B-A (-C) (with Trudy Erwin) 3. I'll See You In C-U-B-A (-?) (with Trudy Erwin) * 4. I've Got My Captain Working For Me Now 5. The Things We Did Last Summer 6. When You Make Love To Me* 7. So Much In Love* 8. The Star-Spangled Banner* 9. Old

Ironsides* 10. My Heart Goes Crazy* 11. Among My Souvenirs 12. So Would I 13. Does Your Heart Beat For Me 14. As Long As I'm Dreaming (–A) 15. As Long As I'm Dreaming (– B) 16. Smile Right Back At The Sun 17. The One I Love (Belongs To Somebody Else) 18. Country Style 19. My Heart Is A Hobo* 20. That's How Much I Love You* 21. Rose Of Santa Rosa* 22. I Kiss Your Hand, Madame 23. The Kiss In Your Eyes



*The "Chronological" series is now firmly ensconced in Bing's production line years of the mid-Forties. It was a time when Bing's star was at its highest in terms of his films and it is no surprise that the strongest discs in these two volumes are those where the song comes from a film. But beyond that, reflecting the fact that 'concept albums' were still a decade away, the rest is a real hotchpotch of individual sides, mostly good, one or two outstanding and a few where Bing might have done better. Accompanists include brother Bob, Les Paul ("Pretending", sung just with guitar, now sounds a very modern treatment) and the classical violinist Jascha Heifetz. One can only wonder how "Lullaby" and "Where My Caravan Has Rested" might have sounded had Bing got to them ten years earlier. Much of the source material is from test pressings, continuing the superior sound found on other recent issues in this series, with only one track, "Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love" sounding rough. 12 tracks on CD for the first time, marked with * in the listing above. All in all, two great discs, not to be missed. Order from Jonzo Records, PO Box 212, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 7LD, UK.*

Bing Crosby & Fred Astaire - Together **EMI Gold** **UK** **£6.99**

1. Roxie 2. Top Billing 3. How Lucky Can You Get? 4. Spring, Spring, Spring 5. It's Easy To Remember (Fred solo) 6. Change Partners (Bing solo) 7. Pick Yourself Up 8. Mr Keyboard Man 9. I've A Shooting Box In Scotland 10. In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening 11. Bon Vivant (Bing solo) 12. Sing 13. Dance In The Old Fashioned Way (Fred solo) 14. I Love To Dance Like They Used To Dance (Bing solo) 15. A Couple Of Song And Dance Men 16. That's Entertainment (Fred solo) 17. Top Billing - Reprise 18. Session Sound Bites – Bloopers with Bing & Fred

Whilst there are no juicy remixes or alternate takes offered, the "Session Sound Bites" used here have previously only appeared on a Fred Astaire set. Amazing to think that it is 30 years since this LP first appeared. Liner notes by Ken Barnes. In a separate note to me, Ken regrets the lack of any other out-takes. This would have meant digging out the 24 track pre-masters and booking studio time, an expense that would be hard to justify for a single re-issue.

The Definitive Collection **Geffen Records** **USA** **$13.98**

1. Where the Blue of the Night (1931 - B take) 2. Stardust (1931) 3. Blue Hawaii 4. Pennies from Heaven 5.Sweet Leilani 6.You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby 7. Home on the Range 8. White Christmas (1942) 9. Sunday, Monday or Always 10. Swinging on a Star 11. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (1944) 12. Don't Fence Me In (with The Andrews Sisters) 13. Road to Morocco (with Bob Hope - B take) 14. It's Been a Long, Long Time 15. McNamara's Band 16. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 17. Now Is the Hour 18. Dear Hearts and Gentle People 19. Play a Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 20. In The Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening (with Jane Wyman) 21. Ol' Man River (1955) 22. Around the World

22 titles, all very familiar of course but if you want a "Best of Bing" selection, complete with handsome sleeve photo, this is probably it. Our thanks to Wig Wiggins for his work in compiling this.

The Ultimate White Christmas **Pulse PLSCD 771** **UK** **£4.99**

1. White Christmas (Rosie) 2. Snow (Bing, Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee & Trudy Stevens) 3. Sisters (Rosie & Betty Clooney) 4. Count Your Blessings Instead Of Sheep (Bing) 5. Gee I Wish I Was Back In The Army (Rosie) 6. The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing (Danny Kaye) 7. Mandy (Rosie) 8. Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me (Peggy Lee) 9. Suzy Snowflake (Rosie) 10. Choreography (Danny Kaye) 11. Winter Wonderland (Rosie) 12. Blue Skies (Bing & Danny Kaye) 13. C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S (Rosie) 14. What Can You Do With A General (Bing) 15. Count Your Blessings Instead Of Sheep (Rosie) 16. The Old Man/Gee I Wish I Was Back In The Army (Bing & Danny Kaye) 17. The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing (Rosie) 18. Sisters (Peggy Lee & Trudy Stevens) 19. Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me (Rosie) 20. Mandy (Bing & Danny Kaye) 21. Snow (Rosie) 22. White Christmas (Bing, Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee & Trudy Stevens)

This is a left over from Christmas of course, but worth drawing attention to. Be warned first of all that not all the 22 tracks feature Bing and indeed, this is more a Rosemary Clooney release than a pure Crosby item. When Bing and Rosie made the movie "White Christmas" in 1954, Rosie's Columbia recording contract prevented her from

appearing on the "soundtrack" release that US Decca put out, with Peggy Lee filling the role that Rosie had played on screen. Not to be outdone, Columbia had Rosie put together her own album of songs from "White Christmas", plus other tinsel treats, and now for the first time, this CD brings together Rosie's album alongside the "official" release. Worth having.

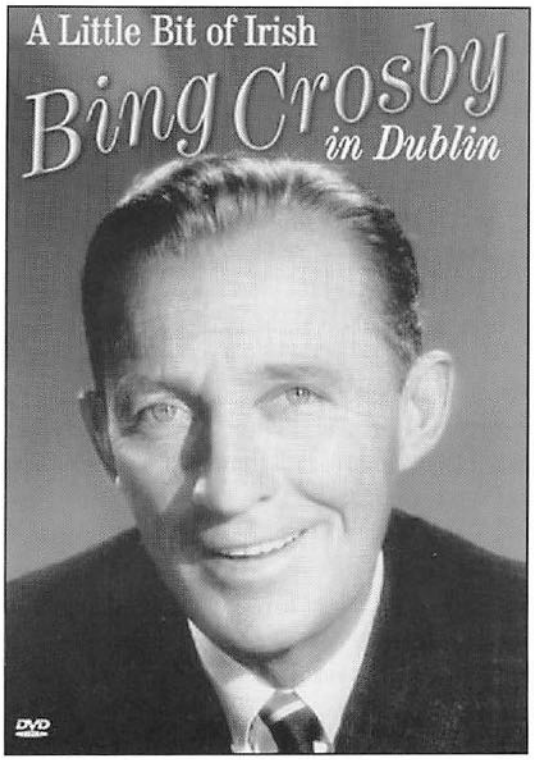
Toni Arden – A Singer's Singer **Jasmine JASCD644** **UK** **£9.99**
54 tracks on this double CD, with Bing featured on Silver Bells (Chesterfield 15 Nov 1950), My Honey's Lovin' Arms (17 Jan 51) You're Just In Love (24 Jan 51), Let's Do It Again (31 Jan 51), There's A Small Hotel (GE 25 April 54) and So In Love (16 May 54)
"Who's Toni Arden" would perhaps not be a too surprising question for someone who happened to stumble on this whilst browsing. This double CD provides the answer and indeed quotes Vic Damone as saying the "greatest girl singer in the world". A bit OTT to my ears, with the solo Miss Arden a little too strident for me. This collection includes her early recordings, plus output from her days with Columbia in the early 50s. She was a frequent duettist with Bing on Chesterfield and GEC radio shows, which is where the duets included here have their origin. Good sound quality.

Coming soon from Jasmine (tentative issue date – April 24): The Crosby Brothers – Bing & Bob. *A 2-CD set featuring Bing and Bob Crosby's 18 commercial recordings together plus 6 of their radio duets on one disc and Bob Crosby vocals on the other disc. Produced by Geoff Milne, so it's bound to be good. Retail price £11.99 but Jasmine will supply post free in the UK if you buy direct from them at UNIT 8, FOREST HILL TRADING ESTATE, PERRY VALE, LONDON SE23 2LX (Tel: 020-8699 4872, email: jazmail@hasmick.co.uk). A full review will appear in our next issue.*

DVD

Not a lot to report on the DVD front this time, but some important additions nevertheless.

A Little Bit Of Irish **Varese Sarabande** **USA (Region 1)** **$9.99**
The long awaited issue on DVD of the 1967 TV show Bing recorded for George O'Reilly in Dublin. This will be good news to many. Bing sings "Molly Malone", "Come Back To Erin", "Galway Bay", "The Isle Of Innisfree", "McNamara's Band" and "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling". Reasonably priced. Variety magazine of March 15, 1967 reviewed the show as follows:
"Hosted by Bing Crosby at his most nonchalant, this pleasing songalog was presented as an affectionate tribute to Ireland, using local talent to give samples from its musical backlog. . . Crosby himself strolled effortlessly though such numbers as 'Dublin Bay' (sic), 'Molly Malone', Come Back to Erin', and other folk standards, and wife Kathryn occasionally acted as hostess with suitable charm. . . Crosby wandered through the Guinness factory and other venues, like a kindly guide and dodged most of the pitfalls of sentimentality inherent in the subject. With the U. S. bulging with Irishmen, and with the Kennedy connection still to the fore, the show should foster nostalgia and mild pleasure in that particular mart."



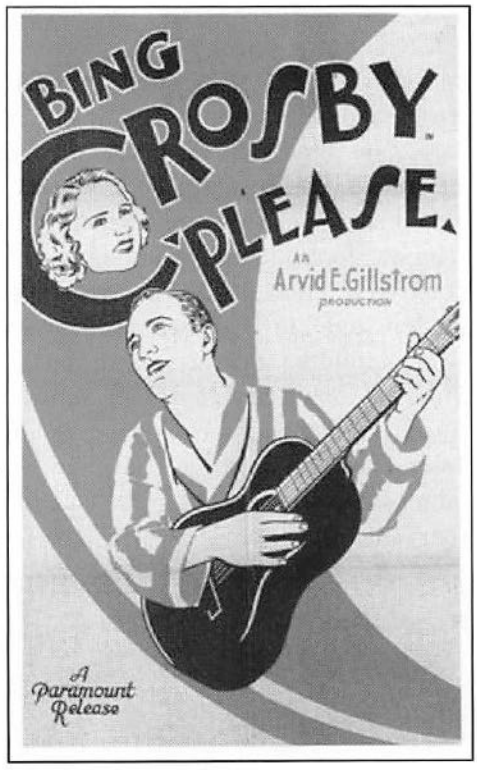
Carole Lombard – The Glamour Collection
Universal **USA (Region 1)** **$18.99**
This DVD set includes six Carole Lombard features (Hands Across the Table / Love Before Breakfast / Man of the World / The Princess Comes Across / True Confession / We're Not Dressing), the sixth being the 1934 collaboration with Bing. I must confess to this being a special release for me because I grew up with my mother telling me that "We're Not Dressing" was the film that made her a Bing fan at the age of 16, so genetically at least, it probably accounts for my passion too. A great film, with Bing doing little acting and lots of singing in that marvellous early baritone.

Cavalcade Of Comedy – The Paramount Comedy Shorts 1929-1933
Kino On Video **USA (Region 1)**
$20.99
There are 16 film shorts on this DVD, with some of them little more

than a filmed version of a vaudeville sketch, while others are more fully developed essays in film comedy. The stars featured range from Burns & Allen, Eddie Cantor and Jack Benny to George Jessel and Milton Berle. Bing is featured in Sennett's 'Sing, Bing, Sing'. Running time: 3 hours 46 minutes.

Reaching For The Moon **Koch Entertainment Distribution** **USA (Region 1)** **$6.99**
The 1930 film starring Douglas Fairbanks and Bebe Daniels with Bing popping up in a cameo to sing "When the Folks High Up Do the Mean Low Down". Running time: 74 minutes

WHAT'S ON THE WEB?



As ever, the Internet continues to throw up its usual plethora of interesting items, including video copies of some interesting and quite rare Crosby items. I mentioned last time that www.nostalgiafamilyvideo.com were offering several Hollywood Palace shows in full and the same company also has some interesting vintage films available. "College Humor", Bing's rarely seen 1933 schooldays picture has also appeared via their eBay shop. Other sellers' listings have included "Sing You Sinners" (1938) and two of Bing's final TV appearances – his guest spot with Hope on a 1976 Olympic special from Canada (with Bing and Bob in Mounties uniforms providing probably the last real glimpse of the "Road" chemistry), plus the 1976 Bell Telephone Special, which Bing co-hosted with Liza Minnelli.

One other growing part of the Internet commerce world is the trade in still photos and movie posters. There are some interesting things around, either to just browse through or buy reproductions for the wall of your Crosby room. www.allposters.co.uk has a good selection of Crosby items, including a poster that I take to be part of the publicity for the short film "Please" – an attractive item and new to me, at least. Similarly, the US based www.moviegoods.com advertises over 58 Crosby films in its index, including the poster for "We're Not Dressing", featured above. Happy hunting!

Ken Crossland
http://www.kencrossland.co.uk

The Bing Crosby Internet Museum celebrates its first decade

Numerous references are made in this issue to the remarkable Bing Crosby Internet Museum (www.mcckc.edu/~crosby) set up 10 years ago by Biology lecturer Steven Lewis at Metropolitan Community College in Kansas City using the College's support staff and server space.

Steven always gives full credit to his colleague Dave Herriman who has guided him for the past decade. Dave and Steven really started the museum together back in the summer of '96 when Steven wanted to learn HTML (the internet language) to take his fall classes online. This was before the College even offered Internet classes. In March they were approved to offer entire Internet degrees! Steven built the Crosby Museum as a fun exercise to learn the html language and with Dave's help got it online on June 6, 1996.

Whilst the bulk of the Museum can continue as it is under Steven and Dave's stewardship, there is a problem with the busy Bulletin Board which has accumulated thousands of messages that have to be sorted and displayed every time someone requests access. It has become a real drain on the College's main server and, because it depends on obsolete software, there is a concern that any Microsoft automatic update could remove the Board overnight.

A decision has therefore been made to relocate the whole Museum to a different server but thankfully the College is still willing to host the Bulletin Board using a different kind of software

To those of you without access to the Internet, this issue may seem irrelevant, but a lively Internet presence will be crucial in the years to come if we are to keep Bing's image alive. Our grateful thanks must therefore go to Steven, Dave and the Metropolitan Community College for their fantastic support of Bing over the last ten years and for undertaking the work to enable this wonderful site to continue to thrive in the future.

Malcolm Macfarlane

The Emperor Waltz - at the NFT

John Benstead drew our attention to a Billy Wilder

season held at the National Film Theatre in London last November. The season included *The Emperor Waltz* and John went to see it and commented "Good to see our man on the big screen again in full colour."

John also sent us the learned synopsis given out to the audience and this featured an extract from Bernard F. Dick's book *Billy Wilder* published by Twayne Publishers in 1980. Here's an extract.

****

Everything about *The Emperor Waltz* pointed to a sure-fire hit. The casting seemed perfect: Bing Crosby as Virgil and Joan Fontaine as the Countess. The film would be photographed in Technicolor, a process that Paramount used sparingly in the 1940s. Paramount Technicolor had a soft, muted quality, unlike MGM's hot rainbow look. Thus Paramount's colour photography could give Franz Josef's court an appearance that was mellow but not overripe. Furthermore, *The Emperor Waltz* would be a comedy with music - like Lubitsch's *Monte Carlo* or *One Hour with You*- where Bing Crosby would warble 'I Kiss Your Hand, Madame' and serenade Joan Fontaine with a song that, to many, is the quintessence of operetta: 'Une chambre separee,' freely translated in the movie as 'The Kiss in Your Eyes.'

Gary Cooper (right) visits Bing and Billy Wilder (left) on the set of The Emperor Waltz.

In a Paramount musical, the songs were worked into the plot, as distinguished from the MGM type, closer to true musical comedy, where the plot was worked around the production numbers; Thus Wilder would not have to subordinate his script to the score. In addition, *The Emperor Waltz* would give Wilder his first opportunity to film in colour. He chose yellow as the perfect colour for capturing the sunset of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The film opens with the credits on yellow brocade as the soundtrack evokes turn-of-the-century Vienna with the title waltz. Gilt is everywhere; golden light glazes the windows, and even the fade-outs are yellow. It would seem that Wilder was really making a Lubitsch film. But what went wrong?

The clue is in the printed prologue that informs us we are at one of the Emperor's 'little clambakes.' From yellow brocade to steamers, it appears. It may seem picayune to criticise Wilder for resorting to slang to get an easy laugh (although calling a ball a clambake is hardly funny); yet the prologue crystallises what is wrong with the film: Wilder was unable to sustain the mood he so delicately established during the credits. Furthermore, he resorts to a double 'meet-cute' on the assumption that if a romance between a salesman and a countess is cute, one between their dogs is cuter. Perhaps Wilder thought that a canine microcosm within a human macrocosm was Lubitschian.

. . . Both Wilder and his fictional creation knew the frustrations involved in peddling a product; Virgil encounters snobs who not only think salesmen are vulgar but also their wares, especially phonographs; by his own admission, Wilder dragged his carcass up and down Hollywood Boulevard for over a year before he sold an original story.

Instead of being a frilly valentine to Vienna, *The Emperor Waltz* became a stars-and-stripes salute to America. American know-how surpasses the impractical baroque. 'You [Americans] are simpler; you are stronger. Ultimately, the world will be yours,' the Emperor admiringly says to Virgil. If this sounds jingoistic, one should remember that Wilder, who spent his youth in Vienna, regards the day in 1939, when he became an American citizen, as one of the most significant in his life. For all its yellow brocade and gold trim, the true colour scheme of *The Emperor Waltz* is red, white, and blue.

Bernard F. Dick

BING'S OSCAR

Member Dale Thielker of St. Louis, Missouri, ran across this article in the *Hollywood Reporter* of January 24-30, 2006. It is from the "Rambling Reporter" section and was written by Robert Osborne:

"Oscars are now made of gold-plated brittanium and cost about $400 to make. In the earliest years they were basically made of bronze. One side note: During the World War II years, when materials like bronze were in short supply, Oscars were temporarily made of plaster. It's been said that once, while practicing his golf swing in the living room, 1944 Best Actor winner Bing Crosby

decapitated his plaster statuette. No matter. In the post-war years, the Academy invited all those who had received those plaster replicas to return them to the Academy in return for the 'the real thing.' Most did."

Note: Apparently Bing was able to obtain two statuettes, and one was donated to Gonzaga University.

Jack Larman- Bing Sing Alike

Here's Greg Van Beek again.

As a result of Pete Cakanic's article about Bill Fowler, and my piece about Bob Pasch, another "Bing Sing Alike" (as he calls himself) has come forward to introduce himself to his fellow ICC members. His name is Jack Larman of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire England. This crooner has a bit of an edge, though. He's been at it now for over sixty years!

Jack Larman.

Jack acquired his first Crosby record in 1940 at age 15, a UK Brunswick label 78 of "Ida Sweet As Apple Cider". From that day forward, as Jack recalls, he was "hooked". At that time he got together with a few friends who were musically minded and formed a little group consisting of a good jazz piano player, a drummer and a bass. Jack, of course, handled all of the crooning. During the war, Jack and his little group took to entertaining in clubs, pubs and charity gigs for hospitals. They called themselves "The Jive Bombers", because, as Jack said "we were getting a taste of the air raids and thought that name would be appropriate".

As time went on, the band broke up, and Jack carried on solo with a keyboard player. He also took to playing drums to go along with his vocalizing. Jack continued doing this on a semi professional level for the next forty years, until in 1984, when his keyboard player sadly passed away.

Jack recalls a "small claim to fame" around 1948, "when Frank Sinatra was on his way up, we had a major dance hall in London called the Royal. There was a band playing called Ay Ling and his All Stars and they were running a Frank Sinatra talent competition so I decided to enter." Jack was rewarded with first prize by crooning his "best ever rendering" of Bing's hit 'Please'. He entered and won several other talent competitions in the ensuing years as well, right up to the early 1970's.

In September 1977, Jack had the good fortune of seeing Bing perform live at the London Palladium. What a sad loss it was, says Jack, when Bing passed away just two weeks later. In 1996, during a visit to the US, Jack visited Bing's grave to pay his respects. It was a "moving, yet happy experience" says Jack.

These days, Jack doesn't go out playing and singing anymore. However he still keeps his voice in shape by doing private recordings at home (karaoke), a tape of which was sent to your American Co-Editor. Jack, in his make-shift home studio, spends a great deal of his spare time putting his own personal stamp on songs he can find suitable backing tracks for. At 81, his voice still sounds strong and assured.

So Jack, on behalf of the entire ICC, we'd like to congratulate you for "keeping the Bing flag flying" for so many devoted years. We hope you'll be doing the same for many more to come.

Greg Van Beek

THE HOLLYWOOD BING

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